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REVIEWED

WARRIOR KINGS
HOMM 4
NASCAR 2002
FIFA WORLD CUP
GLOBAL OPS
GRANDIA II

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DUNGEON SIEGE

Diablo 2 killer or an engine without a game?

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HOTAS

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Grand Prix 4

It's a PC racing legend. There's no other way to describe it. The Grand Prix franchise seems as old as the platform itself. We were playing GP2 when PCPP was but a young pup, we were playing GP3 just before our fifth birthday and now, in a few months, we'll be playing GP4. Resident racing nut Victor Webster takes a long hard look at the latest installment from Geoff Crammond and the team.

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GOTY ANNOUNCED

You came, you saw, you voted, and now we have the results. Painstakingly collated by Timothy C Best and an underpaid band of bitter IT undergraduates. Think Max Payne won? Think again...



DUNGEON SEIGE

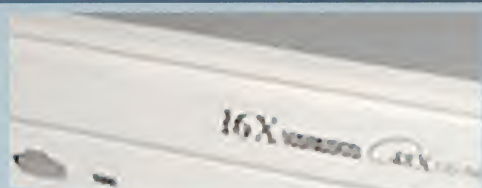
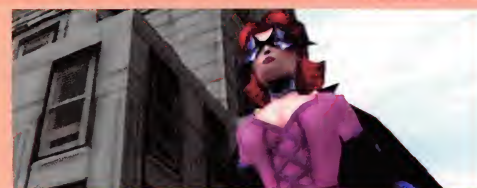
Is it a Diablo 2 killer? Is it the latest, life destroying RPG? Will you be playing nothing else for the next sixth months? Will 2 million Koreans buy it? Find out right here, if you dare.

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FREEDOM FORCE

Meanwhile, Daniel Wilks straps on the day-glo underwear, breaks out of Dr Incredible's hellish biolab and sucks down a few cannisters of Energy X. Does he like Freedom Force, or is he just mad?



CD BURNING - IT'S NO GAME

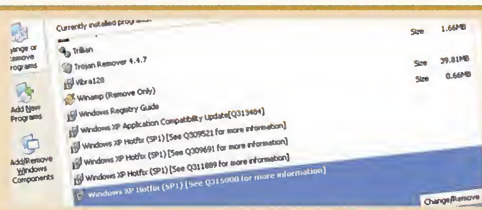
As sort of a welcome hurrah for our new Tech Guru Stuart Calvin, we let him cut sick on his favourite subject - CD Burning. Bring the band on down behind me boys, this gets TECHNICAL

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nVIDIA VIDEOCARD POWERTEST

We strapped James Rolfe into a more or less comfortable chair in easy reach of a screwdriver, and forced him to review 18 nVIDIA based videocards. So you don't have to.



SETUP RETURNS

Stuart Calvin bravely takes up the mighty staff of knowledge which was cast down so precipitously, and uses it to beat your naughty PC back into shape. Serious man, serious help.

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waiting for?

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DVD PAGES

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more phat content,
and free Master Of
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ISSN 1326-5644

PRINTED BY Webstar

DISTRIBUTED BY Gordon & Gotch
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Do they even play games?



As you can see from the table of contents, Dungeon Siege made it in for review this month, and I exercised my Editor's privileges to

write the review myself. So watch out for all of you who like the scores to be a surprise, this editorial is a bit of a spoiler.

With yet another game released suffering from what is now an age-old problem, it's time to coin a new term: Quake Syndrome. Many will recall that the original release of Quake displayed the most amazing gaming engine ever seen, but that the singleplayer game showed very little of the innovation seen in the graphics. Sure, gameplay was solid enough and fun, albeit back in the prehistoric gaming days of 1996 when our experience of game design was necessarily more limited.

But this is 2002 and we've seen a lot of games come and go during that time (more than 1400 through the pages of PCPP) so it's somewhat distressing to find yet another leading title released suffering from a congenital case of QS. That game is Dungeon Siege.

What's particularly bizarre about Dungeon Siege is that even though yes, it's a stellar gaming engine with a fairly bog standard game attached to it, all the developers had to do to make it a sure-fire 90+ scoring title around the world was look at its most successful antecedent - Diablo 2 - and copy all the good bits. It's not like Gas Powered Games were without shame; health potions are red, mana potions are blue and the basic mechanics of the game are exactly the same as Diablo 2, so why did they leave out all the good bits? See the review for the full details.

What this is about is market research. It seems bizarre to me that a company as massive as Microsoft was happy to publish a product that was clearly the result of a bunch of guys thinking "hey we could make a really good 3D engine, let's put a bit of a Diablo game in there" instead of a product that had been carefully researched, had taken into account the strengths of its competition, resulting in a game that not only looked better than Diablo 2, but also had a bigger scope, more stuff to do and by extension, better gameplay.

Publishers and Distributors are continually bombarding this magazine and the gaming community in general with flashy propaganda that insists the games industry is bigger than Hollywood and is a 'serious' entertainment medium now, whatever that means. But apart from the raw dollar sales, I see very little evidence of this. Down in Dallas you have the island of id software, where the programming decisions of John Carmack directly influence the R&D decisions of videocard chipset manufacturers globally, but apart from them everyone else seems to be running around in a state of disarray. It's not all bad though: Blizzard is a company that can keep its head level enough to release quality products, Westwood does quite well, and in a passing nod to my predecessor, Ion Storm can produce excellent work too, although I'll see anyone's Deus Ex and raise them one Daikatana and one Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3. But the vast majority of products show little market awareness. And that's just weird - Hollywood is now mature enough as an industry to be able to state with a fair degree of assuredness whether the latest big-budget movie will smash all records or fade into obscurity even before post-production is complete. Why can't game publishers do the same thing and help developers make better games? The whole thing about humans is that we're supposed to be able to learn from our mistakes.

From here on in I can only hope that Microsoft learns from the mistake of Dungeon Siege and actually starts doing a bit of research and maybe even starts playing some non-Microsoft games. It's all very well for a bunch of insular developers and 3D coders to be playing hours and hours of Diablo2 but they never talk to anyone, why then is it so obvious that the designers and producers never played it? Or at least played it and thought, "Gee, all this game needs is 3D graphics. Forget all the skills, the multiple weapon usage, the cool special items, the streamlined navigation system, the fleshed-out story, the NPCs who are a little bit like real characters, the varied quest structure, the [snip - Ed]..."

Anthony Fordham
Editor
anthonyf@next.com.au

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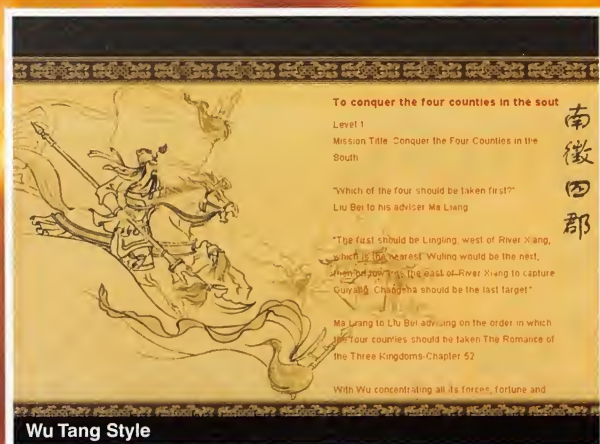
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Dragon Throne

Battle of Red Cliffs





The General is a humble warrior



General: "I love my sword and my clothes and my money.."

P The Battle of Red Cliffs was pretty important in Chinese history. In about 208AD a mighty general named Cao Cao wiped out all who stood in his way, unifying the North. So mighty was Cao Cao that when it came down to battling the last two warlords that stood in his way, Liu Bei and Sun Quan, he already had the party favours out and the hookers, er ... I mean ... concubines, on call.

His elite troops had both rivals badly outnumbered and it looked all over bar the merchandising. Red Cliffs proved to be Cao Cao's Waterloo. He copped a whooping which set the stage for an epic struggle between these three rivals that would last for long years. This is the setting for Dragon Throne, from Chinese developers Object Software.

It's in the rich detail that Dragon Throne shows most promise. Being set in the time of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms (some of the most popular novels in Asia), there is a lot of romanticised history to draw on.

The scenarios are layered (one campaign for each general) with Domestic policies, Sacrifice, Science, Trading and Diplomatic management and a tech tree of over a 100 advances based on real developments to play with (without even mentioning the actual fighting).

It's set to be big. There are two maps, one for close-in work like battles and resource gathering (both elements will be familiar to RTS players) and another showing the cities and who's moving between them. Unlike Shogun

which shares the macro and a micro map feature, both maps in Dragon Throne are in real-time to keep things moving. Do you continue to carefully finish the battle you're currently engaged in or do you send your forces to intercept the troops moving up from the West? Do you send your cannon fodder or the elite troops?

Each squad will be more than just standard spearmen with some armour and morale bonuses from experience. Your warriors will be able to learn new skills from a list of about 40 abilities as they grow more battle hardened. Higher learning ranges from morale boosts to more romantic abilities like Fire Cast that allows erupting, magical, smackdown to be laid.

Another interesting aspect of your fighting contingent is the option to train peasants to take up arms. This allows you to have fighting units which are handy in both war and peace (when they return to the fields) ... now you have the tactical option to sacrifice a little fighting skill for added economic punch when the diplomats come through. No longer will a standing army necessarily mean a huge drain on food. Finally, it also means that enemies might want to think twice before raiding "helpless" farmers. It's a groovy feature and one taken straight from the era of the Three Kingdoms.

The use of rich background material woven into the mechanics, the size of the game, customisable units, science and kingdom management options makes Dragon Throne one to look out for.

Timothy C. Best

Developer: Object Software

Publisher: TBA

Due: TBA

URL: 202.130.3.136/products/zhuanqu/

Why Dragon Throne Deserves a Second Look:

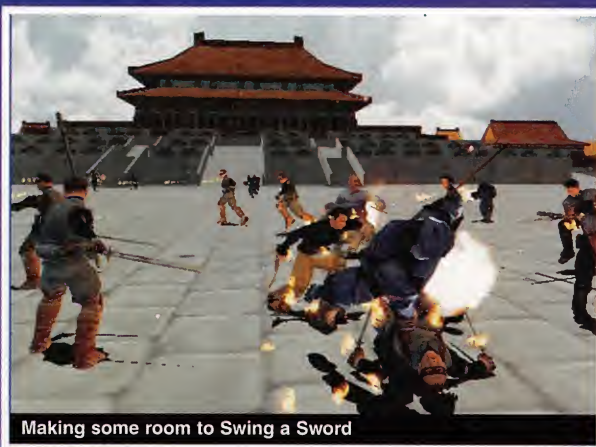


Huge battle area, one map for fighting and one for moving troops to/from cities

Rich Chinese history woven into game mechanics.

Depth of non-combat elements of the game like science and domestic policy.

Customisable troops that learn special kick-arsery.



Making some room to Swing a Sword



He is defeated

New Legends

Smackdown Hong Kong Style



Just like the Anime DVD



Special Moves galore



"Feel the wrath of my pole...!"



"What the Hell are these Guys?"

The odds are a thousand to one, your guns are out of ammo, you have a chipped sword in one hand and a dagger in the other. Things are just starting to get interesting... New Legends is Infinite Machine's take on pure Hong Kong action-movie, hand-to-hand, flying-sword adventure. It's set in the not-too-distant future where demons walk the earth and a fractured China is the only nation which has not fallen to the evil of Xao Gon ... so the sky's the limit when it comes to exotic locations, gunplay, enemies and chop-socky encounters.

The team behind the game was formed by Justin Chin, of Jedi Knight fame, so we can expect all the distilled knowledge gained from making a game revolving around lightsabre combat to be put to good use in the explosive close combat of New Legends.

Great care has been taken to balance the ranged and the melee weapons so that people will want to use both. With the hand shotguns and Plasma Whirlwind guns, it takes weapons like the "Forbidden Blades of Heaven" to pull players away from Chow Yun-Fat and more towards Jet Li action.

Besides straight combat, New Legends will feature other gameplay elements, like stealth missions, and there'll be multiple ways to complete missions so you can use all your skills. The action is third-person, borrowing heavy fighting game elements, with each melee weapon having several "moves" and the hero Sun Soo is able to swing two at one time. Combat is fast and precise: you hit whatever is in front of you as the targeting stays centred: there is no auto aim here, you have to use the

tight controls and Sun Soo's speed and agility to connect weapon to bad guy.

Since Sun Soo can only carry four weapons at once, choice of weapons is vital. Do you need another gun? Is the huge axe worth it purely because it looks cool or would that just be overcompensation?

Talking about size, the weight of the weapons comes into play as well. Carrying the Lion's Fury rocket launcher, Tank Puncher, Plasma Whirlwind and assault rifle will slow our hero down to a walking tank's pace (which is pretty much what he'd be) while a couple of swords and Chain Blade will leave him fast, lithe and acrobatic. Go in heavy or light ... Sun Soo is ready to get it on.

Even properly armed, our hero has a daunting task before him. Thirty-seven odd levels are filled with eager foes as well as Xao Gon's mighty half-demon generals, each possessing superhuman abilities based on one of the five Chinese elements of Air, Water, Fire, Earth and Metal.

Luckily, Sun Soo is not alone, he will have help at various stages along the way. Zhang, a 127-year-old weapons expert, will lay down cover fire as you fight through impossible odds in one stretch. There's a half-demon of great size and strength, there's a woman who can summon a dragon, a fighting monk and a few others all ready to bring something new to the mix.

As the screenshots attest New Legends is looking great, and the setting, as well as the break-neck biff, should put a gleam in the eyes of exorbitant action junkies everywhere.

Timothy C. Best

Developer: Infinite Machine

Publisher: THQ

Distributor: THQ

Due: www.thq.com/newlegends/

Why New Legends Deserves a Second Look:



HK movie action

A Big Gun in one hand and a Big Sword in the other

Intriguing mix of sci-fi and fantasy set against Chinese mythology

Xbox fighting/adventure game from the designer of Jedi Knight

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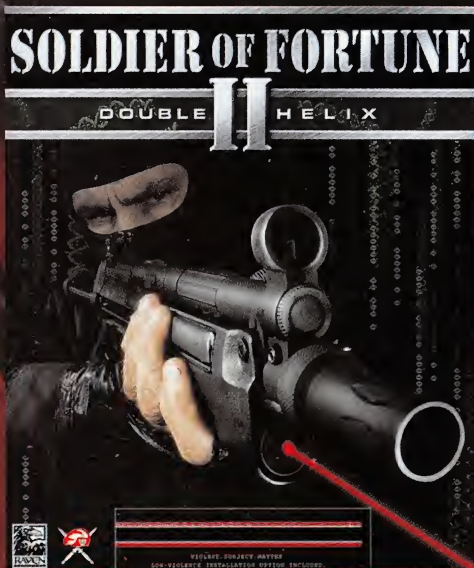
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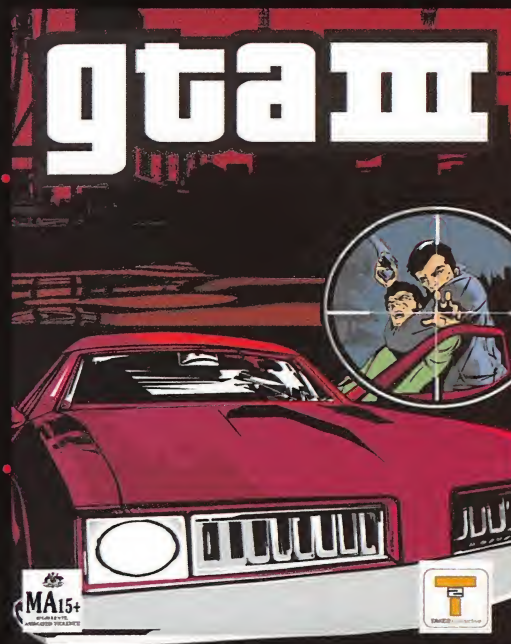


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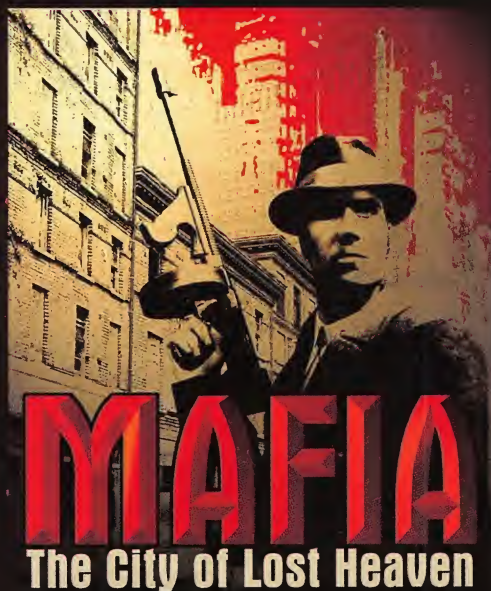
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"HIGH" TECH

A couple of enterprising Yankee stoners, "Agapornis" and "Prozac", have come up with a novel use for their old all-in-one Mac SE 30, turning it into the most tech friendly bong around. Dubbed the iBong, the computer housed pipe supposedly delivers a killer hit bringing new meaning to the old Mac slogan "Think Different".

WARRIOR LOVE

Not only is Diablo II a great game, it now appears that Blizzard's hackfest can mend broken hearts. Two Korean singles, Dong-jun Choi and Yousun Jang recently tied the knot after years of battling evil together online. Hopefully Yousun Jang put all of his stat points into vitality so he can keep up with his warrior partner on the wedding night.

DEAD TO RIGHTS

Hot on the heels of Tekken, Dead or Alive is the newest fighting game to be optioned for the big screen by Mindfire Entertainment, a company specialising in computer-game based movies. No casting has been announced yet but enough cleavage should be on show to keep even the most jaded viewer happy.

LO-FI GAMING

With the current state of games - massive 3D worlds, hefty system requirements and heftier price tags it's nice to know that there's people out there are catering to lower end users. Pong: The Text Based Game (<http://www.karber.net/textbased/pong/>) is exactly what the title says, a faithful text based port of the classic arcade game, Pong.

The New Lara Croft

The Angel of Darkness finally unveiled

In March this year at the Eidos offices in Hammersmith, London, PC Powerplay was allowed a sneak peak at the new Tomb Raider in development at Core Design, ahead of the US and European press launches. The shapely star of games and the big screen returns in a more mature, darker setting in the new game entitled Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness.

The new game takes up Lara's story some time after her escape from near certain death at the end of The Last Revelation. Summoned to Paris by her former mentor, Von Croy, who is seeking five old artworks for the mysterious Eckhardt, Lara finds Von Croy murdered. Now framed for the crime, Lara sets off on her grittiest and most uncertain adventure yet. Unveiling the events between the present and her escape from certain doom will be central to the plot.

The Angel of Darkness takes the world famous heroine in a whole new direction with a darker, adult focus and a more complex narrative than in any previous Tomb Raider title. Inspiration cited includes directors David Fincher (Seven and Fight Club) and Luc Besson

(The Fifth Element and La Femme Nikita) as well as artist Hieronymous Bosch. The result is a bleaker, more gritty setting as the spirits of C14th alchemists and C20th serial killers, mingle in this grim new Tomb Raider world... apparently.

A male adventure hunter, Kurtis Trent, joins Tomb Raider as Lara's offside. He is a playable character in the game and is just one new addition to the Tomb Raider experience. Lara will have a greater interaction with other characters, being drawn into conversation with would-be allies and enemies alike, and will face moral dilemmas. For the first time Lara will have to judge who she can trust and these decisions will directly affect her course - a facet unseen in the action adventure style of the previous titles.

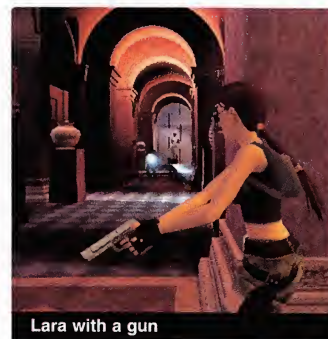
Core Design is working on The Angel of Darkness for release in November 2002. It has been revealed that they are also working on the second instalment, set for release in Christmas 2003. There will be further games from the current reincarnation of Lara Croft, as well as a sequel to the Tomb Raider feature film, again starring Angelina Jolie, which will hit cinemas mid to late 2003. More from E3 in May this year.



The New Lara



"I don't think it's working out..."



Lara with a gun

Mutating Youth

Being all thumbs now not so bad

According to a recent article in the British Sunday newspaper, the continuing usage of small machines such as mobile phones and game controllers is causing slight physical mutation in the hands of today's youth. New research claims that the thumb has taken over as the dexterous digit of choice in people aged 25 and younger. The change is mostly taking place in the generation that has grown up with hand-held devices that require the quick input of information such as games machines and SMS capable mobile phones. "The

relationship between technology and the users of technology is mutual. We are changing each other," said Dr. Sadie Plant of Warwick University's Cybernetic Culture Research Unit. "Discovering that the younger generation has taken to using thumbs in a completely different way and are instinctively using thumbs where the rest of us are using our index fingers is particularly interesting."



Not just a cause of head cancer



Children of the future

US Hacker Force

Nerds join the Cybercorps

Long before the fateful events of Sept. 11, 2001 the US government was in serious talks about setting up an elite cadre of hackers, crackers and phreaks to combat the growing threat of cyber-terrorism. Experts had been warning that it was only a matter of time before groups with terrorist intent would learn how to manipulate the market, invade privacy or even tamper with air flight control. Now, almost 2 years after the bill was first announced the first students are being offered scholarships to study computer

security in turn for 2 years loyal service in the super-heroically named Cybercorps. Unfortunately experts think it may be too little too late, as only 180 students over 4 years will be indoctrinated whereas experts think that a number around 39,000 is far closer to the mark needed. "In terms of solving our cybersecurity problems, it doesn't have a chance," said Michael Erbschloe, vice president of research at the consulting firm Computer Economics and author of books on cyberwarfare.

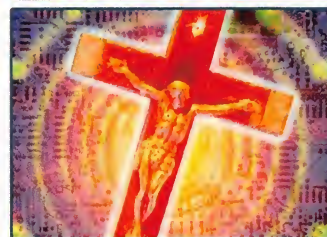


The old face of the FBI



The only chance for the future

BYTESIZE



SAINT OF PR0N

Just to prove that the Catholic Church is up with the times, St Isidore of Seville is set to become the patron saint of the internet. Now everyone can get their fix of pr0n safe in the knowledge that there could be a saint watching over them at all times.

Valve Lets Off Steam

Broadband gaming the way of the future

Creator of Half-Life, Valve recently unveiled Steam, a new broadband delivery software at the Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Jose, California. Valve claims that the new technology will allow users to purchase and start applications faster than from CD and will allow people to access their home PC through their Steam accounts remotely. In addition to these features Steam should negate the need for downloadable patches and updates and does away with the costly exercise of actual physical distribution. "With the

rapid proliferation of broadband connectivity throughout the world, and as gaming and all software developers continue to extend their products' functionality via the Internet, it became very apparent that a platform for delivering new services and offerings was needed," said Gabe Newell, managing director of Valve. With more than 75% of Valves online consumers having access to broadband technology, Steam definitely looks like the transfer medium of the future.



Broadband delivery



Half-Life, still classic

MORE HACK

The newest version of the greatest freeware game of all time, Nethack is now available to download. Version 3.4.0 contains a number of bug fixes to make the game more stable and a bunch of tweaks to keep things fresh. Killing ASCII monsters just got better.

SIMPLY GREAT

The Sims, Electronic Art's virtual-life game has topped 6.3 million units sold making it the most popular PC game of all time, beating the previous winner, 1993's Myst by a significant margin. In just 2 years The Sims has been translated into 13 languages and had 3 expansion packs with a fourth coming soon.

Yoga Inside Fight For Name

Intel far from blissful

Yoga Inside believe it or not has nothing at all to do with computers. It is a free clinic offering Yoga classes to schools, prisons, treatment centres and various other under-privileged institutions but for more than a year now the group founder, Mark Stephens has been fighting with the world's largest semiconductor company, Intel over whether the name of his clinic violates the "Intel Inside" trademark. Yoga Inside began by teaching Yoga to inmates of Southern Californian juvenile detention centres. "Inside"

means incarceration. "But it has a double meaning," Stephens said. "It also refers to taking yoga within you. At no point in time was there a connection to Intel. It never even crossed my mind." In their lawsuit Intel claims that due to the fact that their "Intel Inside" logo appears on "millions and millions" of computers worldwide that any permutation of "...Inside" should solely be theirs. Bad Karma abounds.



Intel targets the Little Guy



Kids + Yoga = Trademark Violation

EVERCRACK PRICES

If it wasn't expensive enough to dissuade you from playing before, Sony Online Entertainment have recently announced that they will be jacking up the monthly subscription price for EverQuest. Thankfully existing subscribers can opt to extend their service by 1 or 2 years for a big discount until the end of April 2002.



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AMD Duron 1000Mhz CPU	\$109.00
AMD Athlon XP 1700+	\$249.00
AMD Athlon XP 1800+	\$299.00
AMD Athlon XP 2000+ also available	

Motherboards

ASUS A7A266-E Motherboard DDR & SDRAM Slots	\$199.00
ASUS A7V266-E Motherboard DDR Slots	\$259.00
Gigabyte GA-7VRXP Socket A Motherboard with RAID	\$249.00
Gigabyte GA-8SRX Pentium 4 Motherboard	\$189.00

RAM

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Hard Disk Drives

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Seagate 60Gb IDE Ultra 100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)	\$239.00

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Creative Sound Blaster Audigy Digital Entertainment	\$189.00
Creative Sound Blaster Live! Digital Entertainment 5.1	\$ 89.00
Hercules Game Theater XP	\$249.00

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Creative Inspire 5300 5.1 Speakers	\$259.00
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Altec Lansing ACS-54 - 5piece	\$189.00
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Hercules XPS-510 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers	\$160.00

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Leadtek 128Mb DDR Geforce4 Ti4400 TV Out	\$689.00
64Mb Geforce2 MX 200	\$119.00
64Mb Geforce2 MX 400 with TV Out	\$139.00
64Mb DDR Geforce4 MX 440 with TV Out	\$219.00

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Sony 24x Write 10x ReWrite 40x Read CD Writer	\$159.00
Acer 24x Write 10x ReWrite 40x Read CD Writer Kit	\$159.00
LG 24x Write 10x Rewrite 40x Read CD Writer	\$159.00

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16x Sony DVD ROM Drive	\$109.00

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Mitsubishi 15" LCD Monitor + Speakers	\$899.00
Sony 17" Trinitron Monitor	\$589.00
Creative 17" Monitor (Black Colour)	\$339.00
Proview 17" Multimedia Monitor	\$290.00

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Thrustmaster F22 2000 Joystick	\$149.00
Thrustmaster Ferrari 360 Modena S/Wheel	\$109.00
Firestorm Digital Gamepad USB	\$ 39.00
Microsoft Sidewinder Joystick	\$ 59.00

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In the tradition of "Homeworld"...

REAL-TIME STRATEGY

STARMAGEDDON

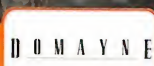
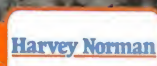
3D SPACE ODYSSEY



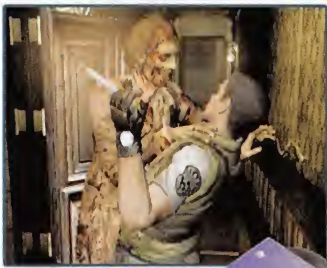
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AVAILABLE FROM THE FOLLOWING RETAILERS



CONSOLIDATION



GAMECUBE

With the imminent Australian launch of the GameCube, Nintendo have pulled out all of the stops in terms of hardware and software that will be available upon release. A staggering 27+ titles will be available at launch ranging from other console and PC ports to Nintendo specific games. Titles include Batman: Vengeance, Primal Fury: Bloody Roar, Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader and Tony Hawk Pro Skater 3. On the hardware front a number of third party peripherals will be available at release for those not happy with the standard controller and an unsupported add-on will allow people to play GameCube with their PlayStation controllers.



PLAYSTATION 2

With the release of the Xbox and the imminent release of GameCube in May, Sony has unveiled their first look at the PS3. Little is known about the next, next generation console apart from the fact that Sony boasts it will be 1000x more powerful than the PS2 and will serve as a total entertainment hub. In other news Sony has announced that their online PS2 initiative will commence in August when they release the official PS2 Network Adapter. The adapter combines both a 10/100 Ethernet connector and a 56k connector (for those without broadband access), and will allow users to connect to their broadband/DSL network and their analog phone lines simultaneously.

The Evil That Games Do

More console related health problems

In the past computer and video games have been fingered as the cause of all manner of physical and social ills ranging from obesity to the inability to relate to people to damaged kids shooting their classmates. If that weren't enough here's another one to add to the list - "Hand-Arm vibration syndrome", a malady formerly only seen in people who use heavy machinery. Researchers have recently announced the finding in a 15-year-old boy whose hands would turn white and swell in the cold and caused him serious pain for upwards of 2 years. Doctors tried everything to cure him but repeatedly misdiagnosed the ailment as some kind of disease or strain.

The correct diagnosis was made when the doctors found that the boy's symptoms began after prolonged usage of his Playstation console. They discovered that he would play for upwards of 7 hours a day. This alone could cause no end of health problems but it was his love of driving games and force feedback controllers that lead to the eventual finding. The boy's symptoms are typical of those most often associated with adults

who work in logging or road-work, industries synonymous with chainsaws and jackhammers and the like. Due to a large number of lawsuits there have been tools developed to limit the vibrations to acceptable parameters. No such tools exist for video game controllers.

The British Medical Journal wonders if these type of game related injuries are far more common than we think. "We believe that, with increasing numbers of children playing these devices, there should be consideration for statutory health warnings to advise users and parents". The Journal concludes that parents should look to limit the time children play on consoles, especially those with force feedback controllers to safeguard against injury. At this stage Sony has been silent on the matter, not commenting on whether future controllers will have built in safeguards but such a result is not expected. In a decidedly un-American move the boy's parents have not tried to sue Sony for untold millions of dollars (as yet) and haven't blamed the entertainment giant for ruining their son's life and future earning potential.



Prototype Playstation rumble pad



Second prototype



Hand-Arm vibration device

SCi Signs Futurama

Hopefully it isn't as bad as the Simpsons games

Sci Entertainment Group (SEG) has announced the signing of the game publishing rights for Futurama; the popular animated series created by Simpsons auteur Matt Groening. The game is to be published on Microsoft Xbox and other consoles in mid to late 2003. The game is being developed by Swedish company, UDS, famous for their critically acclaimed title, "World's Scariest Police Chases". Futurama is set to be a 3D action/adventure title set in the primary coloured sci-fi universe of the television show. Players will be able to take on

the roles of the three main characters, Fry, Bender and Leila in a galaxy spanning comic adventure. The script is being written by the program's scriptwriter and producer, J. Stewart Burns and features a custom-made cartoon rendering engine that should make the game as faithful to the series as possible. No details to the plot have been released as yet but it can be assumed that the game will have the same irreverent tone as the television series. More details when they come.



Like the Jetsons, only funny



Two of the playable characters

AQUANOX

THE SEQUEL TO
ARCHIMEDEAN DYNASTY

2666. Even five years after the fierce fight against a robotic species called Bionts, the world of Aqua still can't be at peace.

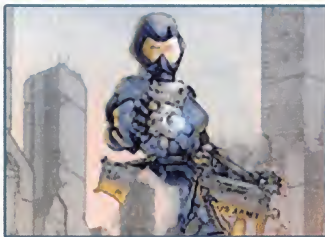
Without suspecting anything it is being put to its hardest test.

And you are right in the middle of it...

- Over 30 single player missions.
- 9 completely different player ships.
- Over 40 diferent enemies, including gigantic sea creatures.
- Gripping story and a detailed world with over 70 NPCs.



BYTESIZE



SUPER-SOLDIERS

MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was recently given a grant of \$50 million by the Department of Defence to create a prototype suit of military armour that will make soldier super strong, self-healing, proof against small arms fire and nearly invisible, much like the Predator. Once again life is imitating games.

RESONANT HEADS

A British company has recently unveiled their new gadget aimed at the youth market, the Soundbug. The Soundbug is a small resonator about the size of a computer mouse capable of turning any hard flat surface into a sounding board, including other people's heads, making it appear as though the sound comes from within.

TERABIT TRIP

Bell Labs has recently announced that it has doubled the speed and distance that data can be sent over long-haul networks by shooting 2.56 terabits per second over 2,500 miles. That's the equivalent of sending 2,560,000 novels all the way across Australia every second. That's a lot of information.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Ryan Patterson, an 18-year-old American student recently won a \$100,000 scholarship for his invention of a glove that can translate sign language into on-screen text. The award, considered by the science fraternity as being a "mini Nobel Prize" has an impressive alma-mater with 9 Nobel prize winners coming from its ranks.

Sony Unveils New AI Robot

Could this spell the end of mankind?

He's 23" tall, silver, has a photographic memory and costs more than a new Mercedes but the clunkily named SDR-4X is set to invade homes around the world. "This robot was designed to live with people in homes," said Toshitada Doi, Sony executive vice president. As such it contains many user-friendly features such as a built in jukebox like music player, an extensive vocabulary and the ability to boogie down on command. The robot, which will go on sale later this year has special sensors built into its hands and feet to help it walk on uneven surfaces such as carpet and has been programmed to fall without breaking and get up by itself.

Unlike the Aibo, the last Sony entertainment robot, the SDR-4X houses 2 cameras allowing it to better differentiate between shapes and objects - it can tell the difference between furniture and patterns on the floor - a problem that plagued the Aibo, which had only one camera. The robot, apart from being able to dance and perform rudimentary object recognition exercises has a vocabulary of around 60,000 words (that's bigger than most people) and can remember the

names and faces of up to 10 people. With a little programming the SDR-4X can hold conversations, perform simple tasks or sing and dance.

In demonstration the robots sang in harmony, did a cute (if somewhat robotically creepy) synchronised dance and stood on a miniature moving surfboard analogue to demonstrate the robots balance. Sony is only one of the companies beefing up their entertainment robotics division to keep the gadget crazy Japanese market happy, with Honda Motor Co., Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Yasakawa Electric Corp. following suit.

Honda has pioneered the walking robot known as Asimo that greets visitor in the company's showrooms and recently rang the bell to open the New York stock exchange. Mitsubishi, a company, which has previously only worked in industrial robotics, has sold 2 entertainment units to a museum for an undisclosed sum that can play simple games, talk to children and draw pictures. Yaskawa has developed a bed shaped robot that can help patients in rehabilitation strengthen their legs.



Sony Killbot Mark 1



Sony Killbot Mark 2



Sony Killbot Mark 3?

Slow Xbox Sales

Console not as popular as expected

Although Microsoft has claimed that the Australian launch of their next generation console was a "brilliant success", the Xbox has sold only half of the number that was predicted. Independent sales data from Inform states that retailers only sold 9,124 consoles in the first four days after the console's release though Microsoft puts the number at over 10,000 after adjusting for sales at independent retailers. Whatever the number, it falls far short of the 20-30,000 units predicted by David McLean, the group manager of Xbox sales and

business operations. It's still far too early to write the Xbox off as a failure as comparisons to the 50,000 PS2 units sold are going to be impossible for a while as its sales figures were only calculated after a month of release. Microsoft also claims it sold an average of 2 games per console sold but Inform puts it closer to 1.6, the same as the PS2.



Big product, small sales margin



50000 units sold in one month

EMPEROR



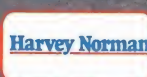
An original melding of
Fantasy RPG,
Real Time Strategy
and the tactical gameplay of
collectible card games like
"Magic: The Gathering"!

Developed by:

Published by:



Available from the
following retailers:



Australia's Most Wanted

You want it, You got it

If this month's list is anything to go by then you guys like your shooters and RPGs. Dungeon Siege finally reaches our review section and so we must farewell it but Warcraft 3, Neverwinter Nights and Icewind Dale 2 maintain the RPG pride. The good news is that you won't have long to wait with these three titles coming to a PC near you real soon now.

GTA 3 has made the list again proving that a little bit of controversy has never hurt anyone as far as advertising goes. IGI 2 has also managed to get in, just bumping out Hitman 2.

The single player version of Counter-Strike, Condition Zero as made a strong showing. It seems you guys want more C-S - as do we.



AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

- 1** Unreal Tournament 2003
- 2** Warcraft 3
- 3** Morrowind
- 4** Neverwinter Nights
- 5** Imperium Galactica III
- 6** Grand Theft Auto 3
- 7** Icewind Dale 2
- 8** Doom 3
- 9** CS: Condition Zero
- 10** Project IGI 2

Send your entries to
AMW@pcpowerplay.com.au

Competition Winners

These folks were so lucky, it fair makes me puke

Serious Sam Winners

Steven Macerak Jr
Brooklyn, Victoria

Jeremy Kinsella
Bunbury, WA

Kym Hirst
Eimeo, Qld

Andrew West
Montmorency, Vic

Paul Turner
Mooloolaba, Qld

You Dumb Lucker Winner

Our Everquest winner managed to avert examination disaster by making use of some interpretative dance skills that he didn't know he had. He wins a limited edition lithograph, collector's edition Everquest figurines, a copy of Everquest Deluxe and a copy of Shadows of Luclin.

Big round of applause to

Ulises Garcia
Campbelltown NSW

Reichspear winners

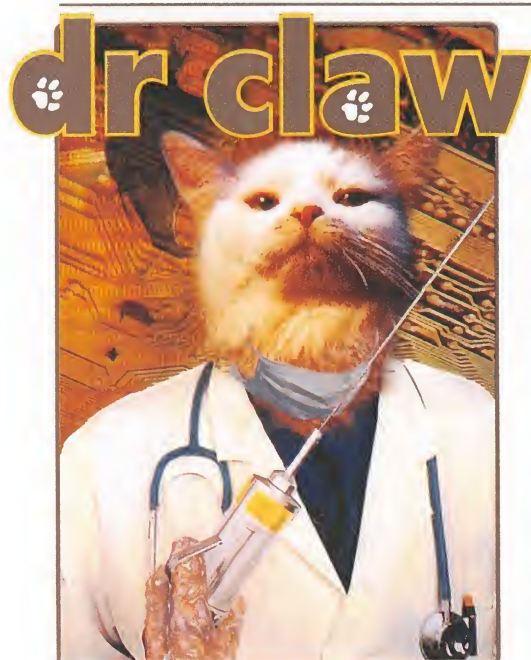
First Prize

Eric Parsonage
SA

Kevin Pearce
Brisbane

James Donoghue
Tas

Sally Jeffers
Vic
Bryan Nixon
WA



champions of the 133+! rumours of my demise have been exaggerated to the extreme because i am still here and i am still kicking. i got xbox like all 133+ gamerz and even thought i don't like it very much i still play it because you have to play it to be 133+. and besides uncle bobs gaming zone says i don't get my money unless i play it all the time and tell you all that it is 133+. uncle bobs gaming zone is a good place to buy games even though they don't sell any pc games because piracy is too bad. so you can get gba and gamecube and ps2 and of course xbox there although he doesn't have games like halo or project gotham he only has shrek and bloodwake and... and that's all actually so i have been playing shrek and bloodwake and i have to say they are quite good. i don't actually THINK that they are any good but i have to say it or i don't get my money. uncle bob is paying me money because he knows that you all respect what i say and i think it is a totally legitimate and moral and ethical thing to do because why shouldn't i sell my good name and

editorial independence to the highest bidder? anyway something else cool happened to me this month and that is that i discovered i can pick up radio waves on the steel ring implanted in the back of my head. i picked up a secret radio message from a secret service agent who said he was using a CS wallhack to defeat the communist menace which i think is cool. i mean using wallhack is cool, not the communist menace. i always use cheats when i play CS because if everyone uses cheats well then the skillz only have to get better to defeat the cheats. i think the funniest thing is when someone cheats and they are the only person on the map who is cheating but they still can't get any frags! but then i have always been able to laugh at myself. anyway the last thing i have to talk about is my pet. dad made me throw away the malfunctioning aibo and instead he got me a giant hugging bear. the giant hugging bear just sits in one place and hugs me so i can't move for about sixteen hours and my dad says it is the best pet he has ever bought me. 18r!

COMING SOON

APRIL

Army Men RTS (Take 2 Interactive) www.3do.com/armymen/
Cricket 2002 (EA) www.easportscricket.com/
Cubix: Robots for Everyone (Take 2 Interactive) www.cubixrobotsforeveryone.com/
EA Sports V8 Challenge (EA) www.v8challenge.com/
FIFA 2002 World Cup (EA) www.fifa2002.ea.com/
Grandia II (Ubi Soft) www.gamearts.co.jp/
GTA 3 (Take 2 Interactive) www.rockstargames.com/grandtheftauto3/
Gun Metal (Activision) www.rage.com/
Heroes of Might and Magic IV (Take 2 Interactive) www.3do.com/mightandmagic/heroes4/
High Heat Major League Baseball 2003 (Take 2 Interactive) www.3do.com/
Legend Double Pack (Take 2 Interactive) www.wanadoo.fr
Mafia (Take 2 Interactive) www.mafia-game.com/
Might and Magic IX: The Writ Force (Take 2 Interactive) www.3do.com/mightandmagic/ix/
Real Myst 3D (Ubi Soft) www.realmyst.com/
Soldier of Fortune 2: Double Helix (Activision) www.ravensoft.com/soldier2.html
Spider Man: The Movie (Activision) www.activision.com/games/spiderman/products/movie/
Tactical Ops (GameNation) www.tactical-ops.to/
The Italian Job (GameNation) www.codesign.it/italian/
The Sims: Vacation (EA) thesims.ea.com/us/news/vacationpressrelease.html
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (Activision) www.neversoft.com/th3/

MAY

Age of Wonders 2 (Take 2 Interactive) www.aow2.godgames.com/
F1 2002 (EA) www.f1gamers.com/
Mythical Warriors: Battle for Eastland (GameNation) www.walkon.de/html/en/projekte.htm
NGT (Take 2 Interactive) www.ngt.com
Project IGI 2 (GameNation) www.codemasters.com/igi2/
RC Daredevil (GameNation) www.arushgames.com/games/rcdaredevil/
Serious Sam: Gold Pack (Take 2 Interactive) www.croteam.com/
Sven Goran Eriksson's World Cup Challenge (Ubi Soft) www.soccerageasia.com/
Taz Wanted (GameNation) www.blitzgames.com/
Tom & Jerry Fists of Fury (Ubi Soft) www.mattel.com/

JUNE

Conflict Desert Storm (GameNation) www.sci.co.uk/games/conflict/desert_storm/
Hidden and Dangerous 2 (Take 2 Interactive) www.handd2.godgames.com/
Necrocode: The Dead Must Die (EA) www.novalogic.com/games/necrocode/
Neverwinter Nights (GameNation) www.neverwinter nights.com/
Prisoner of War (GameNation) www.codemasters.com/Unreal2 (GameNation)
Mafia: City of Lost Heaven (Take 2 Interactive)

Inform**The Official Australian Games Chart**

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

W/E 24 March 2002

TOP 20**Best Selling Full Price PC Games** (over \$30)

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Medal Of Honor Allied Asslt | Action |
| 2 | ◆ | C & C Renegade | Action |
| 3 | ◆ | The Sims Hot Date | Strategy |
| 4 | ◆ | The Sims | Strategy |
| 5 | ◆ | Harry Potter & Philosopher | Adventure |
| 6 | ▲ | Deus Ex GOTY Edition | RPG |
| 7 | ▲ | Star Trek Bridge Commndr | Strategy |
| 8 | ▼ | Civilization 3 | Strategy |
| 9 | ▲ | The Sims Collectors Edition | Strategy |
| 10 | ▼ | Empire Earth | Strategy |
| 11 | ▼ | Diablo II: Lord Of Dstrction | RPG |
| 12 | ◆ | Return To Cstle Wolfenstein | Action |
| 13 | ▲ | C & C Red Alert 2 | Strategy |
| 14 | ▲ | Diablo II | RPG |
| 15 | ▲ | Age Of Empires 2 | Strategy |
| 16 | ★ | Sim City 3000 Unlimited | Strategy |
| 17 | ★ | C & C Yuris Revenge Exp Pk | Strategy |
| 18 | ◆ | The Sims House Party | Strategy |
| 19 | ▼ | Sid Meier's Sim Golf | Sports |
| 20 | ★ | Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon | Strategy |

★ New Entry ◆ Non Mover ▲ Up from last week ▼ Down from last week

Charts can be viewed at www.informbd.com.au as part of

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PCPP Powers Competition

As you all well know we here at the PCPP converted volcano lair are really super-heroes bringing the power of gaming to lay the righteous smack down on evil doers. You all know our public personas; there's the mighty Anthony Fordham, the smooth John Dewhurst, the sublime Chris Zammit, the slightly odd Rob Deal and the scruffy Daniel Wilks. You know our pretend selves but what are our costumed counterparts? To win a shiny new copy of Freedom Force and some superhero related goodies from Australia's greatest comic shop, Phantom Zone we want you to tell us our superhero names, what our costumes look like and what powers we have. Bonus points if the submission comes with illustrations. It's as simple as that.

Send your entries to:

PCPP Powers Competition
 C/O: PC PowerPlay
 78 Renwick St
 Redfern 2016

www.phantomzone.com.au

G-Force! Competition

Does anyone remember the mighty cartoon Battle of the Planets and its heroic team of do-gooders known collectively as G-Force? We do, and at least some of us think about them every day. Our good friends over at Satotech have given us a shiny new Palit Daytona GeForce 2 MX400 to give away so all you have to do is tell us which PCPP staff member is like which member of G-Force and why. Please try not to be too insulting.

Send entries to:

G-Force!
 C/O: PC PowerPlay
 78 Renwick St
 Redfern 2016



DVD

a life in pictures with George Soropos

Start Up .Com

■ Distributor: Madman ■ AV: Dolby Digital Stereo only ■ Rating: G ■ Runtime: 103 minutes

It was not a very long time ago that the .com economy went from hero to zero after years of unrealistic expectations and a tidal wave of hype. Start Up .Com is a unique look at one company, one group of people, caught up in the whirlwind of a booming economy and the financial institutions that help them by playing fast and loose with other people's money. The star of this show is Kaleil Tuzman, the CEO of Govworks.com and a man whose life we see slowly falling apart.

Mr Tuzman and his childhood friend Tom Herman came up with the idea to put government institutions online to allow people to pay for parking fines, licenses and other government charges from the comfort of their own home. It seemed like a great idea not only to Kaleil and Tom but to many investors as well.

Watching the Govworks team interact with the corporates is the most fascinating thing about this

film. The endless rounds of meetings where our heroes come across as being more like wild west snake oil salesmen than business people, and the blind faith that so many of their potential investors put in e-business, shows an incredible naivete on the part of people who are supposed to be the very picture of financial prudence.

The team gradually falls apart under the strain of running a virtual company with virtual assets with staff who only relate to each other on a virtual level. Every embarrassing tantrum and bitchy comment is captured here for your viewing pleasure. The fly-on-the-wall documentary style is brilliantly maintained throughout the film and sometimes makes you wonder why the main characters allowed such an intimate and revealing portrait of their own self destruction. Laughing at .com failures has become a favourite hobby for the more cynical amongst us and there is no better way to indulge in such pleasures than to watch this film

"Reporting live from Bankrupt Central..."



The Old Grey Whistle Test

■ Distributor: Roadshow ■ AV: Dolby Digital audio ■ Rating: G ■ Runtime: 292 min



► **The Old Grey Whistle Test** is not as you might think a brilliantly conceived DVD designed for the testing of whistles in their many and varied forms. It was the name of a very popular live music program aired on the BBC right through the seventies and early eighties.

Because the performances are live, they are all unique to this program and fans of such luminaries as Jimmy Hendrix, Bob Marley, Tim Buckley and the New York Dolls can catch versions of some of their favourite songs which they have not heard before. In all there are forty five artists on this dual layer DVD, well organized so that the user can sort the music according to date as well as artist.

The Score

■ Distributor: Roadshow ■ AV: Dolby Digital 5.1 ■ Rating: M15+ ■ Runtime: 119 min



► **After a long and distinguished** career, during which he almost never made a wrong move, Robert De Niro has been turning up in a few stinkers in the last few years and The Score is probably the worst. Edward Norton and Marlon Brando co-star in this heist flick, a fact surprising in itself considering the quality of the script.

The Score plods through every cliché in the heist genre including the black pyjamas and the sexy techno gadgets. As a result it fails to engage the viewer with a story which seems more like the plot to an episode of VIP or Viper than a feature film. Don't be surprised if you hear that De Niro, Norton and Brando have recently opened a chain of spare rib joints, what other reason could they have had to make this?

Dr. Who: Tomb of the Cybermen

■ **Distributor:** Roadshow Entertainment ■ **AV:** Dolby Digital audio ■ **Rating:** G ■ **Runtime:** 95 minutes

One day mankind will reach out to the stars and discover that aliens really do look like dodgy bits of rubber and vinyl stapled together and pulled along by a bit of string. Then all of Dr. Who's detractors will be laughing on the other side of their faces.

The Tomb of the Cybermen was a story thought lost for twenty-five years until a video master turned up under someone's lounge in Hong Kong in 1992. It was originally released on video after some repair work but this new DVD version is the definitive restoration and a huge improvement over that earlier release.

Tomb takes place during Patrick Troughton's era as the Doctor and is widely regarded by fans as one of the best from that period. The term 'best' should be taken loosely as the show was very definitely aimed at young children during this

period of its production and is therefore quite simplistic in terms of plot development and characterisation.

However, if you are looking for an enjoyable romp through a world of Styrofoam computers and rubber monsters - and let's face it, who isn't - Tomb of the Cybermen is a classic. The story centres around a group of archaeologists searching for the lost civilisation of the Cybermen on the planet Talos. Certain members of the group hope to use the Cybermen to take over the Universe, of course, but the Cybermen have plans of their own. Plans that involve a lot of slow monotonous talking, the making of empty threats and a liberal amount of shaving cream.

The disc also includes some wonderful extras including some behind the scenes footage at BBC's visual effects studio.



The CyberSilverFish



Amon Saga

■ **Distributor:** Madman ■ **AV:** Dolby Digital ■ **Rating:** M15+ ■ **Runtime:** 86 min



► Japanese audiences first saw

Amon Saga in 1986 making it 16 years old, and it shows. The animation is primitive by modern standards, even though the character designs by Yoshitaka Amano are quite good. Amon is your typical brash young warrior type with a quest, to avenge his mother's death, and a love interest in the fine form of princess Lichia.

The story is let down by a cast of clichés and an all too predictable series of events leading up to the final showdown with bad guy Valhiss in his giant Turtle city. Amon Saga suffers greatly from waiting far too long before being released in English and is now little more than a historical curiosity.

Tomb Raider Special Edition

■ **Distributor:** Paramount ■ **AV:** Dolby Surround, 5.1 ■ **Rating:** M15+ ■ **Runtime:** 97 min



► Lara's back again, with Rimmer

the butler and our own Noah Taylor in tow for the special edition release of Tomb Raider. You can almost hear the completists sighing in frustration as they reach into their pockets. Are there enough extras here to make it a good buy?

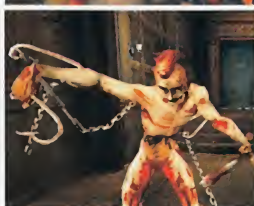
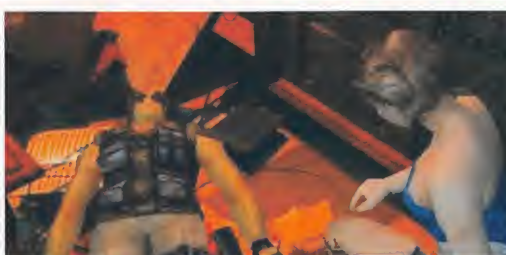
For a start it's a widescreen presentation and therefore great if you're lucky enough to own a wide telly. There are more interviews with the cast, a brief doco about Angelina's physical training for the role (phwoar!) alternative titles, deleted scenes and more. Not bad at all if you're a fan of the pony-tailed super hero.

SCORE LIST

Gold Award
90+

This month in the score list instead of just bringing you all of the games we've looked at in the past we've decided to get all creepy. Not creepy in the sense that we might break into your house in the middle of the night to sniff your underwear style creepy, rather checking out the creepiest games of the last two years creepy.

GAME NAME SCORE # ISSUE



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

Though Clive Barker's influence on the game is somewhat hard to pinpoint, Undying dished up a healthy dose of horror themes, monster killing and more than its fair share of scares. Who could forget the skeletons that could be hacked down to nothing more than an aggressively thrusting pelvis?

83% in PCPP #60

12 o'Clock High	#46	68%
1nsane	#56	87%
Abomination: Nemesis Project	#44	81%
Age of Empires 2: Conquerors	#54	90%
Age of Sail 2	#60	70%
Age of Wonders	#46	84%
Airfix: Dogfighter	#61	79%
Airport Inc.	#48	42%
Akuma: Demonspawn	#47	50%
Alien Nations	#52	75%
All Star Tennis 2000	#54	62%
Allegiance	#50	81%
Alone in the Dark 4	#63	69%
Anachronox	#65	85%
Anarchy Online	#68	86%
Arcanum	#64	92%
Arcatera	#54	49%
Army Men: Air Tactics	#50	65%
Army Men: In Space	#48	66%
Asheron's Call	#50	88%
Atlantis II	#50	78%
B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth	#57	90%
Baldur's Gate II	#53	93%
Baldur's Gate II: Bhaal	#65	89%
Bass Avenger	#57	8%
Battle for Naboo	#60	25%
Battle Isle: Andosia War	#58	76%
Battle of Britain	#59	90%
Battlecruiser 3000	#50	72%
Battlezone 2	#48	85%
Beetle Crazy Cup	#49	74%
Black & White	#60	92%
Blair Witch Project: Coffin Rock	#59	62%
Blair Witch: Elly Kedward	#59	74%
Buck & Bass 2	#56	11%
Call to Power II	#58	78%
Carmageddon 2000	#56	40%
Championship Mgr 00/01	#57	90%
Chicken Run	#59	69%
Civilization III	#68	95%
Close Combat: Invasion	#58	85%
Codename: Eagle	#46	64%
Colin McRae Rally 2	#57	85%

Combat Flight Sim 2	#57	83%
Combat Mission: Bynd Ovrlrd	#56	90%
Commandos 2	#67	91%
Conflict Zone	#63	84%
Conquest: Frontier Wars	#66	85%
Cossacks	#62	79%
Cricket 2000	#51	70%
Crime Cities	#61	52%
Crimson Skies	#55	89%
Croc 2	#48	78%
Crusaders of Might and Magic	#50	75%
Cultures	#56	81%
Daikatana	#52	64%
Dark Reign 2	#51	89%

ALICE

Anyone who grew up with the tale of Alice and the rabbit hole can't help but be disturbed by satanic bunnies, maniacs in funny hats, fat jolly men who look like they want to eat you and the simple image of a sweet looking little girl stalking her victims with a rather large carving knife, can they?

83% in PCPP #58

Deep Fighter	#57	60%
Deep Space 9: The Fallen	#62	84%
Delta Force 2	#46	78%
Delta Force: Land Warrior	#58	75%
Descent 3: Mercenaries	#47	65%
Desperados	#62	86%
Deus Ex	#51	98%
Diablo 2	#53	89%
Diablo II: Lord of Destruction	#63	90%
Dick Johnson V8 Challenge	#46	45%
Dino Crisis	#53	68%
Dirt Track Racing	#55	90%
Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars	#59	87%
Disciples 2	#73	89%
Divided Ground	#67	75%

Dogs of War	#51	81%
Dracula	#47	58%
Dragon Riders of Pern	#67	60%
Dungeon Siege	#74	00%
Earth 2150	#53	91%
Elite Force Expansion	#64	30%
Emperor: Battle for Dune	#63	79%
Empire Earth	#68	89%
Enemy Engaged	#50	91%
Escape from Monkey Island	#55	90%
Eurofighter Typhoon	#65	55%
Everquest Scars of Velious	#59	85%
EverQuest:Lucilin	#73	84%
Evil Islands	#60	79%
Evolva	#50	71%
F/A 18 Hornet	#47	91%
F/A-18E Super Hornet	#54	63%
F1 Racing Championship	#60	90%
F1 Season 2000	#58	67%
F1 World GP 2000	#62	78%
FA Premier League Mgr 2002	#67	70%

BLAIR WITCH : RUSTIN PARR

With a premise that involves the wanton murder of children and one of the most realistic forests ever put in a third person game, Blair Witch Project: Rustin Parr manages the odd feat of being both far better and far scarier than the movie that spawned it.

85% in PCPP #59

Fallout Tactics:Brotherhood	#61	85%
Fate of the Dragon	#61	67%
FIFA 2000	#45	88%
FIFA 2001	#57	84%
FIFA 2002: World Cup	#74	90%
Final Fantasy VIII	#47	77%
Fly! II	#65	71%
Flying Heroes	#51	76%
Ford Racing	#48	72%

Fox Sports NBA 2000	#44	56%
Freedom: 1st Resistance	#62	64%
Freedom Force	#74	00%
Freespace 2	#44	95%
Fur Fighters	#58	73%
Gabriel Knight 3	#44	87%
Galaga	#58	64%
Gangsters 2: Vendetta	#64	51%
Ghost Recon	#69	92%
Ghost Recon: Desert Siege	#74	75%
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	#58	86%
Global Ops	#74	79%
Gorky 17	#47	65%
Grand Prix 3	#53	88%
Grand Prix Legends	#52	95%
Grand Prix World	#49	83%
Grand Theft Auto 2	#44	84%
Grandia II	#74	82%
Ground Control	#52	90%
Gulf War: Op Desert Hammer	#45	55%
Gunlok	#63	81%
Gunman Chronicles	#57	80%
Gunship	#50	89%
Half-Life Blue Shift	#64	78%
Half-Life: Counter-Strike	#55	91%
Half-Life: Opposing Force	#45	90%
Heavy Metal: FAKK 2	#54	80%
Heist	#62	7%
Heroes Chronicles - Final	#67	65%
Heroes Chronicles	#57	68%
Heroes of Might and Magic 4	#74	92%
H&D: Fight For Freedom	#46	45%
Hitman: Codename 47	#56	90%
Homeworld: Cataclysm	#55	90%
Hostile Waters	#61	91%
Icewind Dale	#52	80%
Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter	#61	70%
Imperium Galactica 2	#46	92%
In Cold Blood	#56	80%
Independence War: Defiance	#44	72%
Indiana Jones-Infernal Machine	#45	69%
Infestation	#56	68%
International Cricket Captain	#66	71%

Interstate 82	#47	60%
Invictus:Shadow of Olympus	#48	51%
I-War 2: Edge of Chaos	#63	85%
Jagged Alliance 2	#61	83%
Jane's USAF	#44	86%
Jedi: Outcast	#73	90%
Jetfighter 4	#61	75%
KA-52 Alligator	#48	65%
King of Dragon Pass	#52	31%
Kingdom Under Fire	#60	78%
Kiss Pinball	#58	22%
Kiss Psycho Circus	#54	64%

EVIL TWIN

OK, so the game itself wasn't that good but the design reminded us of Junet/Caro films (Delicatessen, City of Lost Children) and it featured the exploits of an evil twin. Twins have long been a staple in horror movies so it's only fair that they get some play in PC games.

70% in PCPP #68

Klingon Academy	#53	83%
Kohan: Ahriman's Gift	#73	88%
Leadfoot	#64	80%
Legends of Might & Magic	#65	40%
Lemmings Revolution	#51	70%
Links 2000	#44	79%
Links 2001	#57	82%
Links Championship Edition	#68	84%
The Longest Journey	#68	88%
M25 Racer	#45	25%
Madden 2000	#44	84%
Madden 2001	#56	78%
Madden 2002	#68	78%
Majesty	#49	79%
Martian Gothic	#50	51%
Max Payne	#65	84%
Maximum Flight	#52	78%
MDK 2	#52	84%
Mech Collection	#54	69%
Mech Commander 4: B K	#73	79%
Mechcommander 2	#64	84%
Mechwarrior 4: Vengeance	#57	91%
Mercedes Benz Truck Racing	#57	55%
Merchant Prince 2	#64	42%
Metal Fatigue	#53	76%
Metal Gear Solid	#57	78%
Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000	#44	84%
Midtown Madness	#54	82%

MESSIAH

It may not be a horror game and may not contain any overt scares but we definitely think any game based around a semi-naked flying baby invading people's minds and making them run around to kill people and solve puzzles is a little on the frightening side.

48% in PCPP #89

Might and Magic VIII	#49	55%
Might and Magic IX	#74	88%
Millennium Racer	#50	70%
Mission Humanity	#61	7%
Monopoly Tycoon	#67	75%
The Moon Project	#63	87%

Motocross Madness 2	#51	85%
MotoRacer 3	#73	80%
MTV Skateboarding	#55	65%
Myst III Exile	#62	81%
NASCAR Racing 2002	#74	94%
Nascar 3	#44	89%
NASCAR 4	#60	93%
Nascar Revolution	#48	35%
The Nations	#66	70%
Nations: Fighter Command	#44	82%
NBA Inside Drive 2000	#46	68%
NBA Live 2000	#45	90%
NBA Live 2001	#60	81%
Need for Speed: Porsche 2000	#52	75%
Nerf Arena	#46	70%
NHL 2002	#68	82%
NHL Championship2000	#46	78%
Nicktoons Racing	#61	71%
No One Lives Forever	#56	90%
Nox	#48	83%
Offroad Redneck Racing	#64	57%
Omikron: The Nomad Soul	#44	93%
Oni	#58	88%
Operation Flashpoint	#64	94%
Original War	#65	74%
Outlive	#63	56%
Pacman	#57	70%
Pandora's Box	#47	68%
Panzer Elite	#46	85%

**Evil Twin is scary**

Panzer General 3	#58	72%
PGA Golf Titanium	#59	86%
Pharoah	#45	88%
Phoenix	#46	64%
Pizza Syndicate	#54	52%
Planescape: Torment	#46	91%
Pool of Rad: Myth Drannor	#66	79%
Pro Rally 2001	#59	68%
Professional Bull Rider 2	#56	36%
Project Eden	#67	80%
Project IGI	#57	86%
Puma Street Soccer	#46	75%
Quake 3: Team Arena	#58	57%
Quake III Arena	#45	93%
Rainbow 6: Covert Ops	#58	69%
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	#44	92%
Rally Championship	#45	88%
Rayman 2	#45	89%
Reach for the Stars	#54	79%
Red Alert 2	#56	91%
Red Alert 2: Yuri's Revenge	#67	88%
Red Faction	#67	81%
Revenant	#45	82%
Rising Sun	#48	82%
Rollcage II	#50	80%
Rollercoaster Tycoon	#45	81%
Rugby2001	#55	80%
Rune	#56	80%
Sacrifice	#55	90%
Schizm	#66	55%
Screamer 4x4	#58	59%

Septerra Core	#47	84%
Serious Sam	#60	81%
Settlers IV	#62	65%
Seven Kingdoms 2	#44	82%
Severance Blade of Darkness	#59	80%
Shadow Company	#44	74%
Shadow Watch	#49	65%
Sheep	#58	70%
Shogun: Total War Warlord	#66	86%
Shogun: Total War	#50	92%
Centauri: Alien Crossfire	#45	83%
Sim Coaster	#59	79%
The Sims	#47	90%
The Sims: House Party	#61	80%
The Sims: Livin' Large	#54	88%
Slave Zero	#47	55%
Soldier of Fortune	#49	86%
Soulbringer	#51	80%
South Park Rally	#47	41%
Space Tripper	#63	86%
Spec Ops 2: Green Beret	#46	60%
Speed Demons	#47	55%
Spiderman	#68	67%
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	#55	86%
Star Trek: Armada	#49	56%
Star Trek: Away Team	#61	75%
Star Trek: Bridge Commander	#73	79%
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	#46	69%
Star Trek: New Worlds	#56	35%
Star Wars: Force Commander	#49	58%
Starfleet Command 2	#59	55%
Starlancer	#49	93%

NOCTURNE

The camera angles were a bit off-putting but Nocturne had a wonderfully immersive story, incredible sound and some of the most detailed graphics we had seen at the time. If you can get over the poor camera and doggy controls, Nocturne will scare the hell out of you.

79% in PCPP #46

Starship Troopers	#56	76%
Startopia	#63	88%
The Sting	#66	73%
Stronghold	#68	93%
Stunt GP	#63	73%
Stupid Invaders	#57	85%
SU-27 Flanker 2.0	#44	83%
Sub Command	#68	65%
Submarine Titans	#56	70%
Sudden Strike Forever	#65	88%
Sudden Strike	#60	92%
Summoner	#61	90%
Superbike 2000	#49	89%
Swat 3: Close Quarters	#46	90%
Sydney 2000	#52	85%
Tachyon: The Fringe	#54	84%
Thandor	#54	69%
Theme Park World	#45	80%
Theocracy	#49	76%
Thief Gold	#45	96%
Thief II: The Metal Age	#49	95%
Throne of Darkness	#67	91%
Tiger Woods USA Grand Tour	#49	84%
Tiger Woods USA Tour	#57	59%
Tomb Raider Chronicles	#56	71%
Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2	#58	92%

Train Simulator	#63	59%
Traitor's Gate	#44	78%
Tribes 2	#60	93%
Tropico	#64	71%
UEFA Manager 2000	#51	79%
Ultima IX: Ascension	#45	70%
Ultima Online: Discovery Ed	#48	68%
Ultima Online: Third Dawn	#61	66%

RESIDENT EVIL 3

When the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse comes and the dead walk the Earth looking for fresh human brains you can thank Capcom for preparing you with their line of survival horror games. Of all the Resident Evil games on the PC, Resident Evil 3 was the third, not the best. Still fun though.

63% in PCPP #58

Ultra Pinball Thrillride	#56	71%
Unreal Tournament	#45	94%
Urban Chaos	#46	85%
V-Rally 2	#55	81%
Wacky Races	#54	32%
War Commander	#73	59%
The Ward	#61	59%
Wargames Heaven	#54	81%
Warlords Battlecry II	#73	88%
Warlords Battlecry	#54	62%
Warrior Kings	#74	84%
Wartorn	#53	78%
The Wheel of Time	#45	84%
Wild Wild West: Steel Assassin	#51	61%
World Manager 2000	#48	34%
Worms World Party	#62	90%
WW3 Black Gold	#68	79%
X-Com Enforcer	#63	71%
X-Gold	#58	65%
Z: Steel Soldiers	#63	86%
Zax: The Alien Hunter	#68	72%
Zeus	#58	91%

**"Are you threatening me?"****VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE**

Trying to tame the beast within and save your characters immortal soul made Vampire: The Masquerade one of the most compelling action RPGs in recent years. A plethora of vampires and other beasts all eager to end your suffering made for some very tense gaming sessions.

82% in PCPP #52

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IN PREVIEW

GAMES PC & XBOX

They gave us the code, we give you the lowdown

Now we take a sneaky peak at what is coming up in the wide brown world of gaming. This month we have some great things in store for you as our man with the plan, John, has been gallivanting around the other side of the world sampling some of the best that the UK has to offer. This month we have a look at Conflict Desert Storm, Dragon Empires and Prisoner of War, all of which hail from across the big blue wet thing. There's a little something in that group for everyone; you can blow things up in Conflict Desert Storm, battle outlaws and conquer cities in Dragon Empires; and avoid the steely gazes of Nazi guards in Prisoner of War. Ah Nazis, is there no end to their cruel shenanigans?

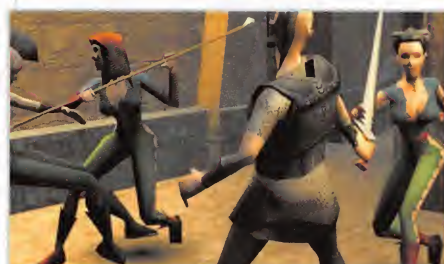
The other game we take a gander at is Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth, which has the potential to be the first Lovecraftian game actually worth playing (not that I'm biased or anything). It also looks quite exciting in terms of technology. Read on and find out why. In anticipation (being a massive Lovecraft fan) I've been practicing bouncing myself off the walls whilst screaming incoherently about the fungus that is trying to translocate me to the future and carving the invisible maggots off my arms with a rusty straight razor.

As you can imagine this has garnered me a few interesting looks in the last few weeks but my colleagues seem to think that my self destructive behavior is rather amusing, or at least more socially acceptable than trying to assassinate people and assume their identities like last month. Anyway, be good be caref... OH GOD! The maggots! They're crawling into my eyes! Get the razor!

Daniel Wilks



- 32 Conflict Desert Storm
- 34 Call of Cthulhu
- 36 Dragon Empires
- 37 Prisoner Of War



Conflict: Desert Storm



The world's stupidest photo opportunity



Objective #1: Kill the Tank



Bullet trails give away an enemy's location



On 2nd August 1990, 300,000 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, an action that would culminate in the Gulf War. Those with hair in their pits may even remember that fateful day - when mid-morning Vidiot was interrupted by non-stop news bulletins. For those under thirty, this particular war is likely to mean little more than that and perhaps the distant memory of soaring petrol prices.

That's what Pivotal Games is hoping anyway. Talking to Alex McLean, Director of Technology at the Pivotal Games studio in Bath recently, he was aware that criticism might arise from the real-world setting of this third person shooter. "It's unfortunate that there are events at the moment that might give rise to people making criticisms. We've definitely tried to keep in mind that this is a game and causing anyone offense is certainly something we're not at all interested in." At the same time, there's no such thing as bad publicity - just ask Rockstar Games.

War is Fun

Conflict: Desert Storm is about a solid game experience above all else. Players take control of four elite soldiers from the British SAS or US Delta Force: a dedicated team leader; a heavy weapons and demolitions expert; a specialist in infiltration and electronics; and a sniper. Directing and coordinating their movements and attacks is the crux of the game.

Though reminiscent of such titles as Hidden & Dangerous and Rainbow 6, McLean makes the point that the aim of Conflict is quite different. "We're trying to make something much more accessible, more fun and try to lift the game away from the hardcore crowd... it's much more of an action strategy than a simulation so environments are directed more towards gameplay than realism."

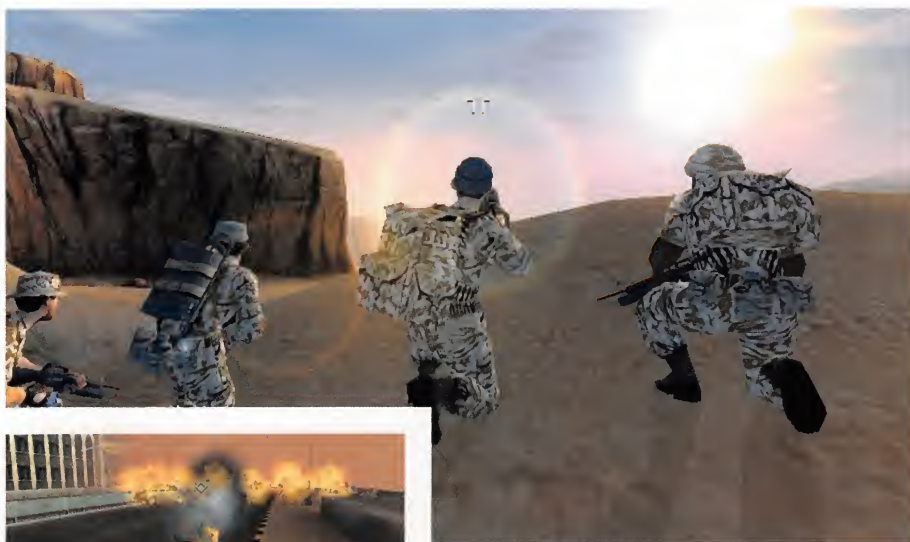
Kuwait is necessarily the setting and troops will make their sneaky way through

wilderness and urban scenes - which may sound a little dull. Pivotal gets around the monotony of desert and near-desert environments by introducing day and night transitions through the course of missions. As well as providing noticeably different atmospheres through the passage of a day, the eventual and total darkness also introduces the use of night goggles for tactical purposes. More importantly, the action varies from close range combat to firefights over wider distances.

Cooperation

In Conflict: Desert Storm, keeping your troops together and having them cooperate is a necessity. Pivotal achieve this in a number of ways. McLean explains: "The first way is that each of the characters has their own relatively unique skill set and inventory, each necessary to complete goals and mission objectives."

Developer: Pivotal Games ■ Publisher: SCI ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: TBA ■ Rating: TBA ■ Available: June 2002



Lens flare is beautiful



"You'd be dead!"



Avoid civilian casualties



Conflict: Green Screen

"The second one is that the AI will conspire against you should you try to play the game with only one or two characters. For instance, if you start playing with just the sniper, the AI will start sending people around behind you, trying get close and real accurate to counter that tactic. If you choose to just play with a sniper you might find yourself dead. If you'd brought another player along with you to cover you, then you'd know they were sneaking up on you.

The other thing is characters are that bit more accurate and useful if they are human controlled. If you control each of the characters for a certain amount of time each, you push all their experience up. If you control only one, the others will be left behind and have a tougher time in the later levels."

Damned Controllers

The game is being developed for PC and next-gen consoles in tandem. One of the results of

this development is that a good deal of work has gone into mapping controls for dual analog controllers. McLean explains the benefits: "I think the limiting factors of a console controller make developers think about control problems in greater depth. Whereas with PC you've got a load of buttons, you don't need to think about it, you just map them and leave them and chances are that the first thing you come up with will be what the game is released with. With only four buttons, you really start to think about what to do with them. The controller interface is continually evolving. The ultimate goal is to make all controls require only one button press rather than two by making it context sensitive or whatever... of course, with the PC, everything's completely customisable. Also, if you plug in a USB Playstation controller, you can play with that. To be honest, most of the PC players here use the controller."

Using the weapon reticle, you can move troops to a certain point and then order the

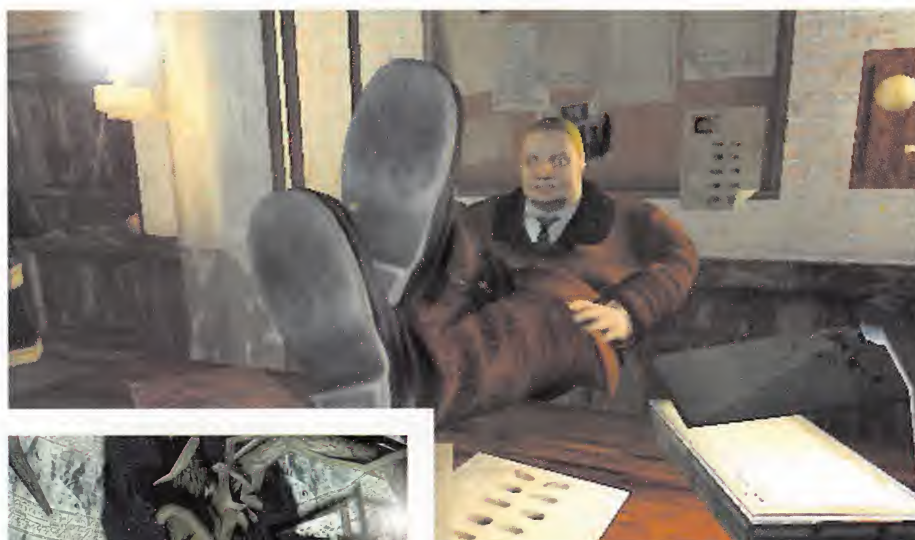
direction that they should face when they reach that point. McLean discusses "It's basically done by a one press order, where you direct the player and flick the analog stick at the end, to indicate direction. It's much better than any two stage process."

Enemy AI has been designed to make the enemies convincing in their actions, rather than amazingly tough to defeat. McLean said: "Enemy soldiers can see the corpses of other enemies, if they see someone hit, they'll drop and run over to them and have a look around. If they see a grenade they'll get up and try to run away, sometimes in a panicked fashion - they may well run off a cliff to escape."

Conflict: Desert Storm played extremely well with both a keyboard and mouse setup or with a USB controller, when we saw the latest build of the game at the SCI offices in Battersea, London. There's not long to wait with release scheduled for mid June this year.

John Dewhurst

Call of Cthulhu



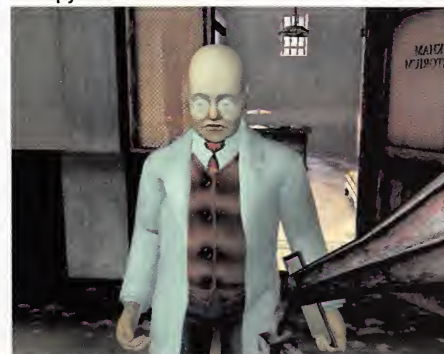
Lovecraft loved giant feet



"Heeere's JOHNNY!!!"



Creepy man



Games based on the supremely creepy stories of horror maestro Howard Phillips Lovecraft have never held much water, failing to encompass the metaphysical terror that the author could invoke with one deft swipe of his pen. With the imminent release of Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth this looks set to change.

In his short career as a writer, Lovecraft penned more than 65 stories and voluminous amounts of poetry, articles and correspondence, all of which have made him hugely influential in horror, music, movies and games. Some that have referenced his work are Blood 2, Quake 2, Shadow of the Comet, Prisoner of Ice, Resident Evil, Alone in The Dark and X-Com: Terror from the Deep, among others. What sets Dark Corners apart from the rest of the pack at the outset is that it is the first game on the PC to acquire all of the legal rights to use the vaunted Cthulhu title.

Pickman's Model

The Call of Cthulhu licence first came into popular gaming vogue in the early 80's with the release of the popular pen and paper RPG of the same name by Chaosium. Fans of the game will delight in the fact that Dark Corners has taken the RPG as the primary source of background material. The pen and paper game was initially the brainchild of Sandy Peterson of Doom, Quake and Age of Empires fame so you know it has a good pedigree. The RPG featured a great deal more action than the stories but the themes remained the same.

Great and powerful old beings, known collectively as the Great Old Ones were once the owners of the Earth. They are greater than we can possibly comprehend, both in scope and power - to know them is the fastest road to insanity. Over the millennia their power waned and mankind slowly crawled its way to the top of the pack but

compared to the Old Ones humanity is but a blight on the land, pests beneath their notice. We may be the defacto rulers of the Earth but one day the Great Old Ones will return and it will herald the end of mankind. H.P. Lovecraft wasn't necessarily the most well adjusted of authors but he sure knew how to weave a tale.

Shadow over Innsmouth

Developed by UK company, Headfirst (creators of Simon the Sorcerer 3D) the game takes place in 1920's fog-clouded London and takes an entirely first person perspective. Whilst the story is original, only drawing on Lovecraft for source material, much of it will seem familiar to horror readers. The protagonist is a Private Eye down on his luck (or one of three other as yet unknown characters) hired by a mysterious benefactor to find a missing person in the small seaside town of Innsmouth. Of course things are not as simple as they sound. Our stalwart hero

Developer: Headfirst Publisher: Fishtank Interactive Distributor: Red Ant Price: TBC Rating: TBC Available: 2nd Qtr 2002



"Wait... I hear something..."



It's a big fish nasty



VERTIGGOOOOOO!!!



discovers an ancient scheme in which the Deep Ones (mutant giant bipedal fish thingies for those of you who haven't read any of his stories) are combining their DNA with that of the townsfolk making crossbred abominations. To make matters worse, when the stars align in the right position the Great Old Ones may be able to make a comeback. Wisely, Headfirst are keeping tight lipped as to the rest of the plot, though it has been strongly suggested that characters will be able to progress through many of the places described in Lovecraft's stories.

The Haunter in the Dark

Initially the developers looked at making the game in the mould of Alone in the Dark but later opted for a first person style game for one simple reason. In a first person game it's hard to see something creeping up behind you. The screen will be free of such clutter as health bar. If you want to know if

you're about to die try to give yourself a checkup, if you want to know how many bullets you have left check your gun. Though the game may have a passing resemblance to Quake or Unreal, Dark Corners is a very different beast indeed, with the focus more on stealth and investigation than killing everything in sight.

As such the armoury is only quite small, consisting of period revolvers, shotguns and maybe a rifle or two. To further dissuade people from going gun crazy is the fact that there is no magic healing power ups. Players may be able to find a medical kit with some bandages or maybe a shot of morphine but healing takes time and is never perfect.

At the Mountains of Madness

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth remains true to its RPG ancestry with the inclusion of skills and stats, the most important of which is Sanity. Characters will

begin the game sane but throughout the course of events may lose their minds due to the sheer scope and otherworldly nature of the plot. Sanity can crumble due to seeing monsters, performing alarming or violent acts or interacting with things outside the ken of mankind. Each of the characters will have built-in flaws that will become more pronounced the further they descend into madness. They may start to experience effects like the ground flying up to meet them, hallucinations of being suspended in mid-air or hysterical blindness or worse.

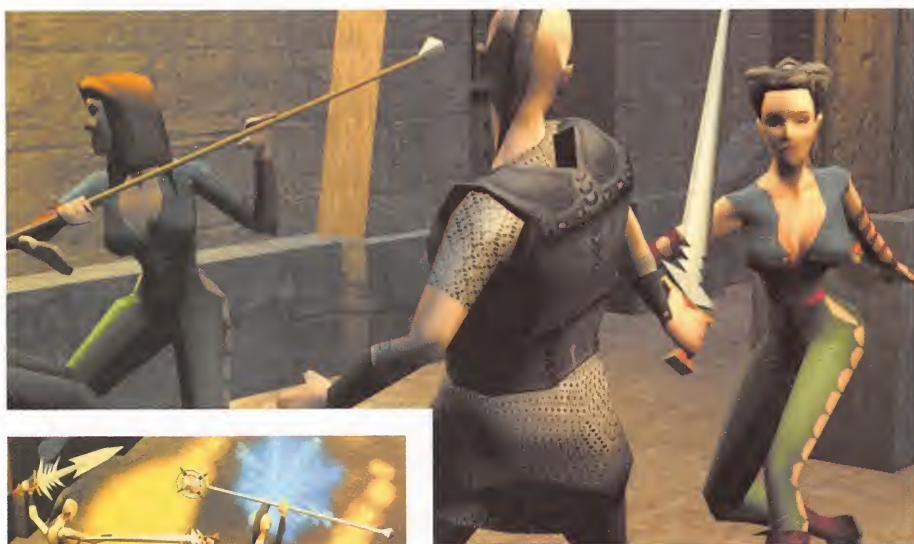
The Last Test

Headfirst is including an online multiplayer mode featuring deathmatch and cooperative play that allows up to four people to complete the game together. The deathmatch mode will be teamplay focussed. Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth is due out soon.

Daniel Wilks

Dragon Empires

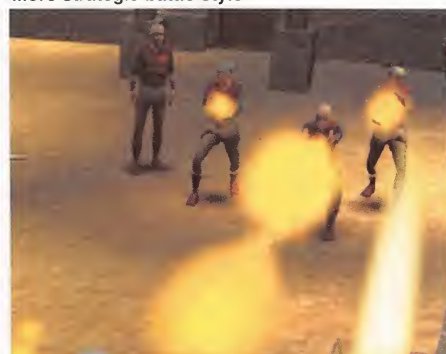
Developer: Black Studio ■ Publisher: Codemasters ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: TBA ■ Rating: TBA ■ Available: 4th Qtr 2002



Azzala was well equipped for battle



More strategic battle style



Bounty Hunters face down the Outlaws



The crowded MMORPG market now has Codemasters to worry about, as Black Studio are developing their own online RPG, with a focus on trade as well as combat. Ted Carron, Studio Head of Black Studio spoke to us recently about all things Dragon Empires.

Tell us about the setting for Dragon Empires.

Fortitude is a world where dragons live alongside humans. There are five empires, each with their own unique ruling dragon type. Empires then have ten cities, which are a focus for commerce and power in the world. The game involves transporting goods between those cities and making things in those cities and the political battles to rule them.

What can players do in the game?

There are a number of fundamental roles. The first one is trader/manufacturer, where players take resources from where they are free to a place where they can be changed into valuables, like factory for example.

Another role is the outlaw. These players prey on caravans containing valuables as they move between cities. Another is the

bounty hunter, these players seek out the outlaws and protect caravans. There are also clan members who strive to take over cities.

Will people be able to play other than humans?

No, it's just humans. This is nothing to do with Middle Earth or anything Tolkienesque at all!

You encounter dragons and other creatures...

You will be able to encounter dragons and you can fight them but you'll have trouble...

How will people find encouragement to be traders and manufacturers?

We rely on supply and demand. All items in the world are manufactured, so if nobody makes anything, there won't be anything. If you want to be an outlaw, you'll need a sword. A lot of people will want swords but not want to make them, which means it will be a very lucrative market. It will be worthwhile because money equates to power.

What about combat?

In battle, there are a number of different offensive and defensive types: piercing,

slashing, magical and others. It will be impossible for anyone to max out all of their defence or attack abilities, meaning that everyone has a weak spot.

While attackers are searching for weaknesses, defenders can change defence types to some extent, in an attempt to lessen the effect of another person's blows. As people are attacking, they are also trying to disguise their own weaknesses.

That's a very different style of battle

We hope so. It's not hack-hack-hack. The mechanics of it are based around abilities. We don't distinguish between magical and non-magical attacks.

Each character has a series of ten abilities at any one time, which are specified by the weapons being held. If you're holding a staff, you'll get spells. If you're holding a sword, you'll get sword attacks.

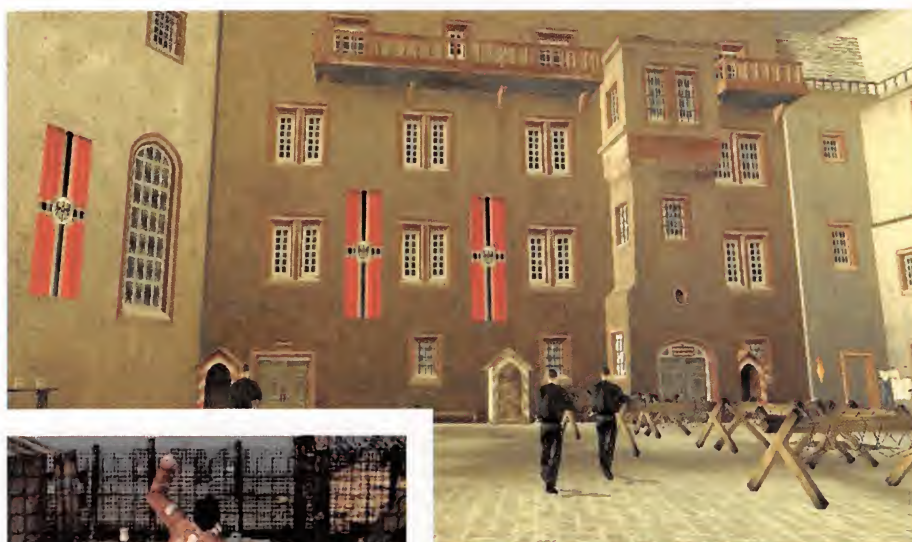
When can we expect Dragon Empires?

If all goes well, we hope to release the game for Christmas this year.

John Dewhurst

Prisoner of War

Developer: Wide Games ■ Publisher: Codemasters ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: TBA ■ Rating: TBA ■ Available: Sept 2002



Stone under the watchful eyes of the guards



You can't keep Running Away



"Here, piggie, piggie, piggie!"



Captain Lewis Stone strolls the length of the exercise yard in Stalag Luft I prison camp. His fellow prisoners wander back and forth around him, talking, wasting time. The two guards on duty pause and exchange some words. Our Captain sees this and takes the opportunity to duck behind a building. He only has an hour to snoop around before roll call and the clock is ticking...

Welcome to *Prisoner of War*, the Codemasters action-adventure where prisoners join the fight against the Germans in the Second World War. But this is a quiet battle - no weapons allowed - so the guards are far more dangerous than in a traditional action game. There is no choice but to tiptoe around them - or is there?

More than a Sneaker

Carl Jones, Executive Producer at Wide Games explained that the game isn't just about stealth: "We've tried to build POW to appeal to any kind of gamer. For the twitchy, fast gamers you can play the game by using all your skills to avoid the guards and "fast track" through the game. However, PoW can

also be approached from a more intelligent angle, where players can be more cunning - this can often save time in the long run. Finally, the game can be played at a much more sedate pace, more focussed on roleplaying and using other characters."

Prisoner of War seeks historical accuracy but not for its own sake. According to Jones, "Colditz Castle, a key level in the game, is perfectly realistic from the outside. However, in reality the interior of the castle features a vast number of tiny rooms - simply not ideal for gameplay, so we reduced the number of rooms... We're basing the game heavily on the history of the war and the real life heroes of the POW camps in World War II."

Clock Watching

While in the camp, there are no loading screens. The clock is ticking and to this end, the game is in real-time - albeit slightly faster. Jones continues: "The game has a true day/night cycle. Internal and external lighting will change depending on the conditions outside. Weather will also be happening in real time, so a storm may start with some

small drizzle, and build up over a couple of game hours into a huge hurricane."

Guards Not Stupid

While you're hatching plans, there's only a certain amount of time before you will be missed on parade. And the guards aren't stupid. Jones explains: "The guards can use three senses to detect the player, sight, hearing and even smell. These senses are accurately modelled to give the guard a suspicion level. These include loud noises drowning out softer noises, real time lighting effects on sight, crowd occlusion - losing someone in a crowd of similar people and motion detection.

"We wanted to create the most believable world ever seen in a game yet - which means modelling all the real world phenomena accurately. I can honestly say that no other game has gone as far as we have in terms of creating a believable real world." We eagerly await *Prisoner of War*, due the second half of 2002.

John Dewhurst

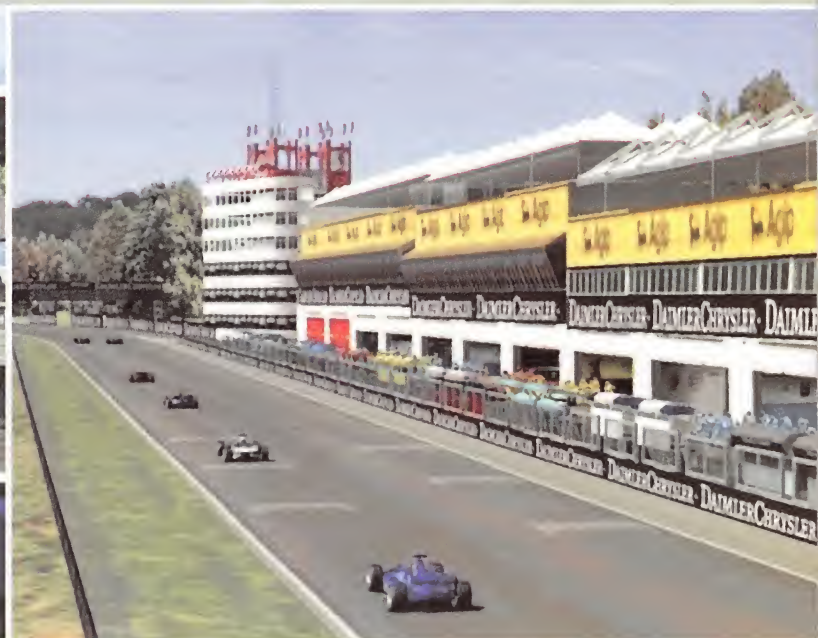
GRAND PRIX

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Geoff Crammond is the Sid Meier of Formula One Racing games - and, as anybody who's played "Civilization" is aware - that's not a claim to be taken lightly. Crammond, like his strategy gaming counterpart, produced a landmark, definitive vision of a game. Geoff Crammond's Formula One games represent the conclusive apex of the genre. Today, Crammond maintains a position of unequalled influence on Grand Prix 4, he's the only one with his name in the title after all. And what an eagerly anticipated title it is - the release of Grand Prix 4 has the cyber-racing community eagerly poised on the edge of their collective seats.





A Fresh Look

The Grand Prix 4 design team have focused on expanding and improving on the already immensely popular Grand Prix 3. According to Phillip Gilbert, the producer of the title, the game was designed with significant consideration given to the opinions and desires of the enormous fan-base that has grown around the Grand Prix series. Referring to the GP3 fans, Gilbert explains, "We want to make Grand Prix 4 the best it can be, so we've taken on board plenty of views of people who have followed the game over the years through the GP series; to cater to these people by adding things that they want as well as things that we wanted..."

2D pit crews they wanted animated, they wanted a new graphics engine, more detail, pretty tracks which we've supplied. Things like 3D marshals, new game modes, these are things we've catered for."

Sounds like they really have been listening to the fans. This is definitely a good sign of things to come - Crammond's Grand Prix crowd are an opinionated, vocal mob. One only has to browse one of the many Internet forums devoted to the subject, in order to get a sense of the fervour and the wealth of ideas that are abundant within this particular sect of the gaming community. Unfortunately there are some things that have been overlooked. A career mode is one such feature that was desperately desired but not delivered.

3D Racing

Most will be glad to hear that Grand Prix 4 boasts major graphical changes. Veterans to the series will be relieved to discover that each car has its own unique, up-to-date body shape (in the past, Geoff Crammond's Grand Prix cars have all used the same, generic car model). This latest instalment is

also the first to have fully three dimensional, animated pit crews, three dimensional flag marshals, and - wait for it - a whole 3D pit garage and animated race engineering team too! The depth of detail in GP4 is unsurpassed in any racing game to date, at least that's what they're telling us, "We have 3D pit garages now, so your car starts in the garage, you have your qualifying monitor. When you leave, your monitor goes up as it does in real life and your race engineers come out and wave you away. They'll also push your car back into the garage as they do in real life. We've got a fully animated pit crew, when you pull into the pit we use the Arrows crew again. The guys change your wheels, your front nose if you need it." GP4 also supports full screen anti-aliasing, and the background buildings and scenery present much more depth and detail. Gone too are the stationary, patchwork crowd



"Who is Geoff Crammond?"



Geoff Crammond is the founder of Simery Ltd set up 1999, with the aim of designing and implementing games such as the now famous Grand Prix series. Simergy have worked in conjunction with Infogrames producing Grand Prix 4.

Geoff Crammond originally worked in industry before producing his first computer game, named "Super Invaders" for BBC micro in 1981. He has now become one of the most well known game programmers ever - made famous by his line of Grand Prix Racing games. Geoff Crammond also produced other well-known - if not slightly aged - titles such as "Aviator", "Sentinel", "Revs" and the enormously playable "Stunt Car Racer".

Geoff Crammond has become a passionate games programmer since first piecing together "Super Invaders", and is now recognized throughout the computer entertainment industry as the king of the hill, at-least when it comes to Formula One games. As GP4 producer Phillip Gilbert states, "Geoff's done a lot of work on traction control, launch control, active differential". And therein is evidence of one Geoff's Crammond's unique qualities: he has the ability to get his hands dirty with almost every aspect of computer game production - indeed much of the code from the first Grand Prix games came directly from Geoff Crammond himself.



textures, the grandstand crowds have now been animated to add that extra dash of authenticity. All in all, the graphics have been totally reworked since GP3, and it shows in screenshots and in play.

Engine Sounds Redone

The audio was one area in which GP3 fell somewhat short. The major complaint was that you could only hear one engine on the whole grid, that being your own. Of course, this is totally unrealistic and stood entirely out of character in a game that aspires to true race driving simulation. In order to remedy the problem, the GP4 team enlisted the help of the Arrows Formula One team. This time, they have gone to extraordinary lengths to get the sound effects right. The engine sounds are the result of actual on-board recording from Arrows Formula One cars. Not only that, but the sounds effects differ

depending on which camera angle you're using, all of which are created from real Formula One recordings. The GP4 team also attached microphones to the exterior of the Arrows Formula One cars, in order to ensure that the peripheral sound effects are authentic. As is fast becoming the standard for racing simulators, GP4 will also include fully three-dimensional sound effects (as long as your sound card supports this feature). A further addition to the audio department is that of radio communications and ambient background chatter, "The fuel nozzle could get stuck and you could lose some time. Then you'll get a pit radio message saying as much. We tried to make it as realistic as possible", Phillip Gilbert claims, "We believe we've got the most authentic sounding game that there is" - and, judging by the measures taken to ensure the bona fide sound effects, it's a promising claim.

A reworked menu system accompanies the new release. While retaining some of the look-and-feel of previous releases, it has been refined and improved. Veterans to the series will have no trouble navigating the system, while initiates will never be more than a few mouse clicks away from starting a race.

Just like on Telly

There are also new driving views and gauges. Grand Prix 3 had the cockpit view - which was the "main" driving view. There were some others, but none of them provided feedback concerning speed, RPM (revs per minute) and the like. With GP4, these details have been exposed in alternatives to the "default" cockpit driving view including Trackside, T-cam, Road-rumble and Nose-cam, all of which include rev counters, speedometers and other such gauges. While this isn't entirely realistic - real Grand Prix drivers

"Race Options"

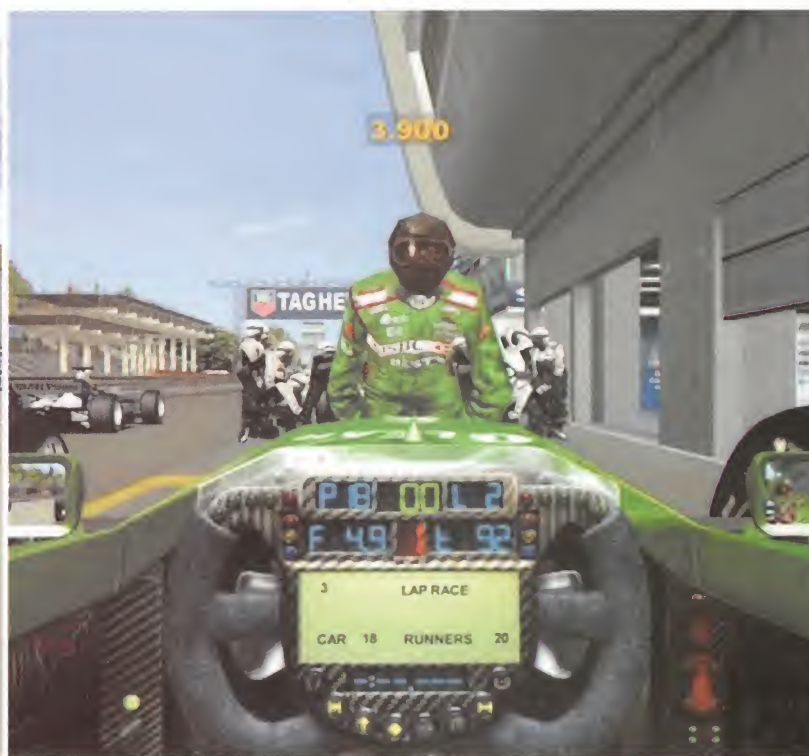
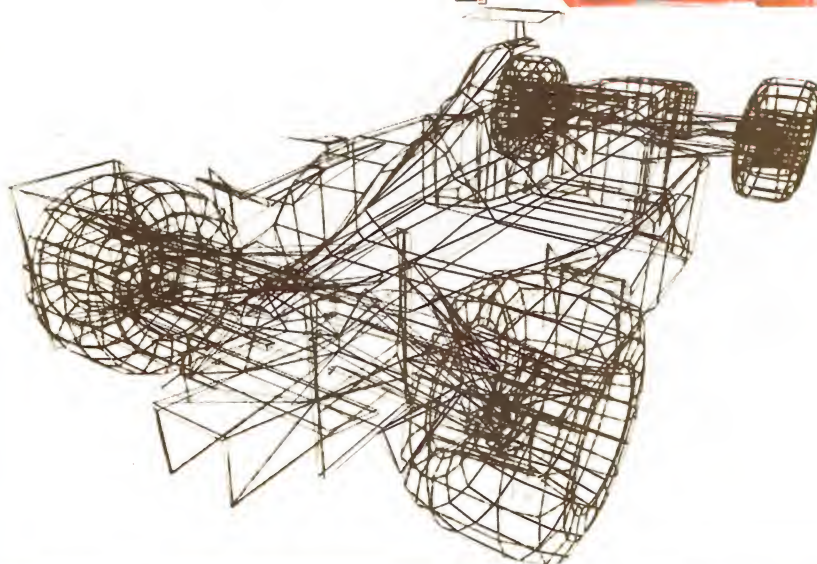


Concerning gaming options, Grand Prix 4 has followed closely in the footsteps of its successful predecessor, Grand Prix 3. The game features all the standard affair, "Quick Race" (a single, friendly race), "Non-Championship" (a full race weekend, including all practise and qualifying sessions) and "Full Championship", which is a full competition, season long campaign.

In addition to this, GP4 has a new race mode, "Quicklaps". The idea of the Quicklaps option is to pitch a handful of drivers (up to twenty-two) against each other, turn for turn, to compete for the best single lap time. Kind of similar to the "Top 10 shoot-out" qualifying event utilized by the Australian V8 super touring cars. The Quicklaps mode is an arcade-orientated option; it utilizes rolling starts (meaning that you cross the start-line on the roll, like in Indy car racing) and discards the standard outlap. Quicklaps mode is bound to be addictive fun, but it also serves as an excellent tool for setting up your car. If mechanical tweaking to the n-th degree in order to milk out extra 10ths of seconds on your lap time does not sound like your idea of a good time, it's still a nice opportunity to thrash the hell out of Formula One car.



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obviously don't have access to multiple views and gauges - the option still remains to drive using the cockpit view. These initiatives were incorporated with the aim of making the game available to more than just the hardcore simulation fans, by echoing the familiar television broadcast format, most notably in the T-cam.

Much like its predecessors, GP4 has selectable difficulty settings and driving aids. Following in the footsteps of the third edition, there are five difficulty levels in GP4, ranging from "Rookie" to "Ace". Another facet that has been retained from past releases are the "Driving Aids" (for example, "Automatic Shifting", "Steering Help", "Braking Help" etc.). Changing the difficulty level affects not only the AI performance, but also limits the Driving Aids that are available. Appropriately, you can't drive on the "Ace" setting with an automatic F1 car! The difficulty levels correspond approximately from an arcade type

game (with the difficulty on "Rookie" and all the Driving Aids on) to a hardcore Formula One simulation (on "Ace" with all the Driving Aids turned off). The difference is not in changed game physics, but rather the fact that the driving aids make the car much easier to handle.

Choose the Challenge

The new camera views, combined with the varying degrees of difficulty combine to make a truly versatile title. It is obvious that the design group have really focused on creating a racing game that is accessible to full-on simulation nuts as well as being easily playable to the less intense arcade racer. This is no small feat, but Phillip Gilbert, for one, clearly feels as though this difficult goal has been accomplished, "this is a great game and it's not only for the hardcore sim fans. It can also be played as an arcade game. Each track has its own car set-up, a

couple of clicks and you're in the race, with driving aids on, you can be racing. At the other end, you can go for Ace level, tweak your car setting, turn the driving aids off and it's a real proper Formula One simulation."

Sim Vs. Arcade

All this talk of customising Grand Prix 4 - the latest in a long line of truly great simulators - to make it more of an arcade racer, may understandably have some ultra-realism enthusiasts a tad worried. Worry not, as GP4 is most certainly a simulation at heart. Sure, it's a simulation with an adjustable realism level, but a simulation it remains. The driving aids can serve even the most hardcore Grand Prix guru well, as an invaluable tool for learning tracks and adjusting to the new driving physics. When questioned on the validity of the simulation aspect, Gilbert is quick to ease any fears that may exist, "Absolutely there's still the



"What is missing?"



Infogrames have not been able to please everybody. This is reasonable considering that the passionate fan-base that has sprung forth during the evolution of the Grand Prix series can often be somewhat demanding. Some things that were desperately wanted have unfortunately been left outside of the finished product.

By far one of the most sought after, yet undelivered facet of Grand Prix 4 is the concept of a career mode, wherein players could really take control of a Formula One team over the course of several seasons. At it's paramount, this could have featured such things as sponsorship contracts, advancing technology, and money management, just to name a few.

Other possibilities that won't appear are real-life driver personalities and stop-go penalties and pace cars. Although some may find these exclusions slightly disappointing, when it's all said and done, it must be remembered that GP4 is only a game, and it's bound to be a good game. It remains to be seen whether these exclusions will mar the experience of GP4.



hardcore simulation element. If you want to play from the cockpit view, it's the same as it was in GP3, the graphics have been upgraded but it's still Grand Prix: you can tweak all your set-ups to a minute detail. Geoff's done a lot of work on traction control, launch control, active differential, all of which can be adjusted. So we're catering for a wider audience but still looking after the GP2 & 3 fans with the sim experience."

Hardcore Crashes

That's all sounds good, but a little experimenting will uncover aspects of the game that do not belong in a true hardcore simulation. For example, your car can be repaired - no matter how severe the damage may be - as long as you can get it back to the pits. This is just one example of gameplay taking precedence over the sim experience. No doubt some big name drivers would appreciate the same opportunity!

Grand Prix 4 will be released on the Xbox as well as the PC. This is Geoff Crammond's console debut, and to help ensure a success some changes needed to be incorporated. Instead of the PC multiplayer options, the Xbox has a split screen display option to allow more than one player at a time. The menu system has to be redesigned for the Xbox and allows efficient navigation using a hand-held controller.

Teach Me to Drive

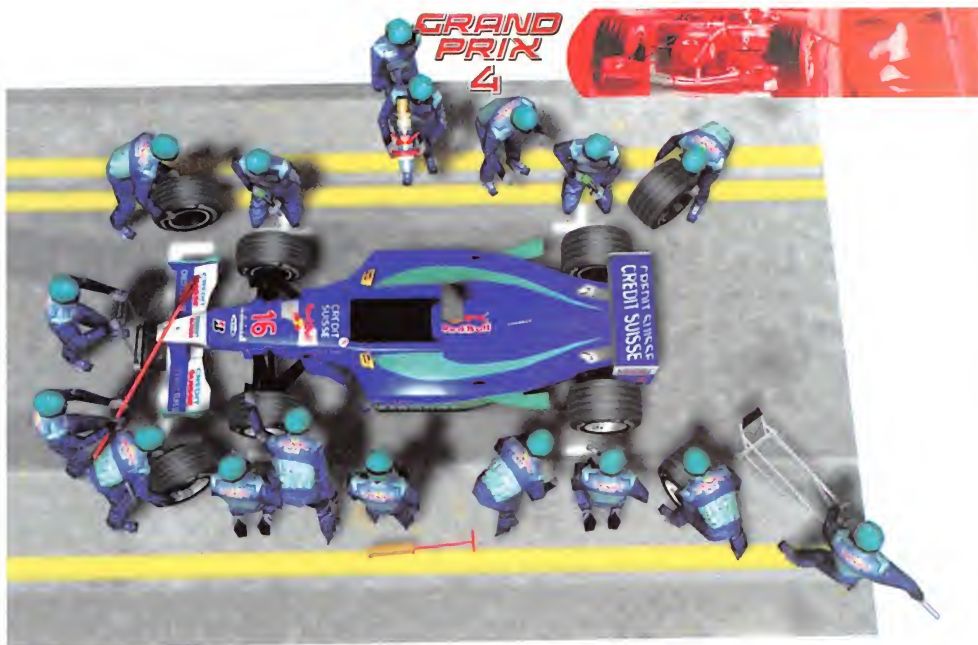
An exciting addition to Crammond's Grand Prix series is the inclusion of a "GPpedia". The GPpedia is a virtual encyclopaedia of Grand Prix knowledge, which focuses on spurring mechanical novices to have a tinker with their car's setups. This valuable source of GP information is comprised of a series of in-game videos featuring Arrows test team manager, Mark Hemsworth. The GPpedia will

never actually give you one direct, irrefutable solution to a car setup problem (because, according to Phillip Gilbert, "there are no answers in Formula One"), but Mark Hemsworth will make suggestions and outline options, some of which ordinary people - those that do not have a day job as a race mechanic - may not be aware. Hemsworth says things like, "On a longer, faster track with certain weather conditions, you might consider a two pit stop option, or perhaps lowering the front wing, or taking a higher fuel amount on at the start of the race." This way, you are presented with several options and - just like real Formula One - there is no hard-and-fast way of doing things. The foremost goal of the GPpedia is to encourage people (who may not otherwise be inclined to meddle with the default car setups) to go ahead, experiment and generally involve themselves a little more with the

"No Internet Play"



It may come as a surprise to some - not to mention a disappointment - that Grand Prix 4 will not support Internet play. Some reports floating around the Internet have suggested that this is because none of the design team knows how to properly implement it, but I find this extremely unlikely - not to mention a little disturbing. The real reason is that the Formula One license obtained by the GP4 crew will not allow for online play. Why not is quite a mystery. It has occurred to some that such driving simulations are fast becoming so realistic that online Internet leagues could possibly, in the future become a far cheaper and much more interactive alternative to the real thing - although this sort of reasoning is obviously rather farfetched. The GP4 producers are quick to remind us that none of their competitors have Internet support either, so they haven't really neglected anything. This is poor logic: if it were reason that everybody adhered to, there would be no advances in gaming technology at all! And despite this, many would argue that their competitors do actually have Internet support anyway. It appears the GP4 team have conveniently defined their "competitors" as modern Formula One simulators. This definition does not include other racing simulators (admittedly none in the Formula One genre) that do support Internet play - and have done for many years.



mechanical aspects of Formula One racing. It's all about making the game more user-friendly and accessible. This is accomplished by explaining these aspects to the people that are not die-hard, racing-sim nuts.

GPpedia Explains

But that's not all the GPpedia is good for, as Phillip Gilbert explains, it is loaded with other useful pieces of information, "We go deep into the game and talk about packers and bump rubbers - that's all very well but who knows what they look like? Well, we have a tour of a Formula One car showing people exactly what these things are, what they look like and what tweaking will do." Such a tutorial tool has been sorely missed from racing games to date, and GP4 has taken definite strides forward with this new feature. The GPpedia is bound to make the more intricate details of racing simulations more accessible to even the most non-

mechanically minded among us.

The new track models are another quality in which Grand Prix fans will revel. The Geoff Crammond's team have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that they have modelled each course as accurately as possible, "The tracks are all based on GPS (Global Positioning System) data. The camber's right, the slopes are right, the corners are accurate. We also had an artist at each race taking thousands of photos to use as reference. This has made the tracks more realistic than ever before. This is an F1 simulation if you want it to be."

This attention to detail - however impressive - is not a new phenomenon to PC racing simulations. Papyrus has used similar methods to ensure exact cyber-replicas of the US NASCAR tracks. It is said - be it NASCAR or F1 - that real drivers can learn a track, bump by bump, through the seat of their pants. This being true, for a modern first-class simulation

experience, such accurately measured tracks are fast becoming a necessity - and Grand Prix 4 is not going to be left behind.

Checkered Flag

Even before it has hit the shelves, there are few question marks regarding the quality of Grand Prix 4. Geoff Crammond has built a reputation of which is acknowledged by virtual racing drivers worldwide. Even Grand Prix 3, which was released years ahead of its time, is able to keep on-par with the latest offerings from the competition. The advent of another viable contender for the Formula One Racing crown - that being the latest offering from Electronic Arts - has not conquered Crammond's empire, in fact it's made it even more resolute. Spurred on by the desire to be the very best, Grand Prix 4 is sure to be a title that cannot be overlooked.

Text by Victor Webster
Interview by John Dewhurst

Timothy C. Best picks up the mike, taps it a few times and fidgets in his cheap suit ... he's got awards to present...

Is this thing on? Oh, okay, thanks. Oh forget it. The mike's not important, the gala presentation is not important, the fact that you have spoken, gentle readers, is all that matters. Games are made to be played and it is you, our fair readers, who do the playing. We reviewers try to let you know what a game is all about as best we can but in the end it's your vote that counts.

You vote with your dollars, you vote with your time, love and effort ... and there are a lot more of you than there are of us. Here are the real games of the year ... voted by great panel of experts: PCPP readers. Let's see which games created the worlds that rocked works, took you in and didn't let you go until you were late for work or ready to sleep through Applicable Maths.

Without further ado...



No One Lives Forever

Developer: Monolith
PCPP: 56
Our Score: 90%

We said: "Groovy, Baby!"
Why Dominic Watzdorf voted for it:
"Long, funny, snow, AK-47 and it's in the 60s."

Well, swingers, what have we here? A game based around shagadelic Cate Archer, a 60s secret agent in a stealthy orange and white cat suit? Smashing!

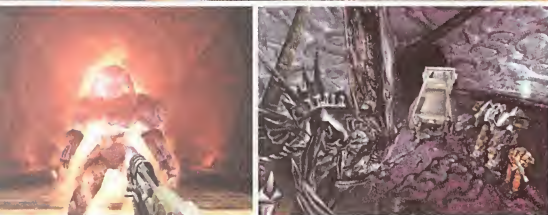
No One Lives Forever took what was becoming a stale FPS genre and transplanted the macho shooter world into the over-the-top 60s of Dr No and the Man from Uncle.

The costumes were bright, the villains diabolical and the gadgets out of reach of today's technology. Missions took place in exotic locales from Morocco to Germany to the Caribbean (play "Spot that Bond" location) to Moonraker space stations (there, I knew one)

to freefall after diving out of a plane (Spy Who Loved Me?). The production quality was brilliant with a groovy 60s soundtrack, impressive graphics, fresh mission design, clever dialogue and gameplay second to none.

The game featured location damage, an AI that would have guards co-operate to find you after they had been tipped off by things as subtle as foot prints, a flash light beam or birds being scared into taking wing.

The thing that turned most heads and made NOLF stand out amongst a sea of technically proficient FPS games was humour that, as one voter put it, "was actually funny." Groovy baby!



Aliens Vs Predator 2

Developer: Monolith Productions
PCPP: 69
Our Score: 84%

We said: "A weak story mars this excellent action shooter that is genuinely frightening."
Why Felicity Thomson voted for it: "Best Score you can get this side of System Shock 3."

Games often make you laugh, make you think, and make you fast twitch. Games rarely give you a good scare. Aliens Vs Predator 2 has clawed its way onto the list because you like to be scared, don't ya, kids?

Take two of the most popular, cult, gun-happy sci-fi franchises and put them together. Then, let players take the role of their favourite hunter in all the universe and you're got a game with possibilities. Devotees loved the distinct styles of play, with marine's fast firing weapons and motion sensors; the alien's wall crawling speed and lethal caress and predator's

specialty vision, stealth and big energy weapons.

More than anything though, players loved the creepy atmosphere drawing on six movies, Giger's design work and facehuggers which you could hear coming but couldn't see until a fraction of a second before it was too late.

Then there was the multiplayer that pitted the killing machines against one another in co-operative play. When you're scared no one can hear complaints about a light storyline. Just like the movies, this game is all about the thrills. Game over man, game over.



Black & White

Developer: Lionhead
PCPP: 60
Our Score: 92%

We said: "Not the greatest game ever, but still great."
Why Luke Cain voted for it: "Because my daddy says it's good for me to be in control of something."

Ah, little Luke, you've struck gold there. It's all about control. Megalomaniacs of the world rejoice!

Be a god. Treat peasants like the insignificant they are. Fireball villages, rear a great and mighty beast to do your bidding, Mothra-style. Laugh maniacally, be a vengeful or a loving god ... fulfil your every control-freak desire that is thwarted in everyday life!

Alternatively, play Black & White for the impressive creature AI which really seems to learn and instil a personality in your creature. Challenge yourself to build a self-

sustaining economy and expand your borders. Watch as the world around you organically change to match your playing style, or just sit back and marvel at the luminous colour pallet and eye-candy.

Black & White was one of the most talked about games of all time and by the time it hit shelves people were expecting it to walk on water and do your tax returns. It couldn't do either but that didn't mean it wasn't pushing the bounds of what was possible in gaming and people responded to the dream they saw there.

There's no other game like Black & White.

Ghost Recon



Developer: Red Storm
PCPP: 69
Our Score: 92%

We said: "A rich and suspense-filled experience that is best enjoyed through its co-op multiplayer modes."
Why Andrew Smith voted for it: "Realism, great graphics, viable co-op play and a singing Russian!"

Not many gamers would find the idea of slow minute, upon slow minute, waiting, watching, in swaying grass a gripping experience. Even if you know there's going to be a big bang at the end, the incentive isn't there for many ... except if the game you're playing is Ghost Recon.

Creeping forward, watching the guards, waiting for the perfect moment, the perfect shot is what it's all about. When you simulate the operation of an elite commando unit that's what you're in for.

Beyond the tension of hiding in the grass, with your heartbeat sensor telling you that there's an armed man who will try to kill you,

somewhere close, which you can't see ... the game also offered something else: a co-op mode that let you play through the entire game with a team of your friends.

The slow tension broken explosively by well-timed and planned action is intense in single player but it is something altogether different and amazing with real people covering your back and flipping out in the heat of combat.

For its simple interface and shooter methodology combined with think-first shoot later suspense - and the realistic approach to combat it conjures - Ghost Recon snuck into your hearts and made a clean get away.



Red Alert 2/Yuri's Revenge



Developer: Westwood
PCPP: 67
Our Score: 88%

We said: "Good patriotic fun; a welcomed hit for RA junkies. Extra side and additional units add spice to an aging franchise."

Why Ms F. van Earle voted for it: "Fantastic strategy, lots of replayability, fun, great explosions."

Westwood have been credited with creating the real-time strategy genre with Dune II and since then they have spent a lot of time repackaging it. They've also spent a lot of time working on crazy cut-scene movies ... reaching a peak with Yuri's Revenge, which not even the B-grade acts getting their first industry break could take seriously.

There are starlets delivering mission briefings. Practical black PVC (so easy to clean) for the nasty Russians and white PVC for the good-old allies. We have mind control devices brilliantly planted where no one will find them: in enormous glowing structures next to famous international landmarks.

The tongue in cheek style is very much intended and the phaser is set to giggle with Red Alert 2. Features from Tiberian Sun which were cool but not so fun, went the way of Culture Club collector cards.

We went back to a couple of sides, one resource, no deformable terrain to make rebuilding your base a nightmare, clean graphics, fast pace and a scramble to develop the biggest possible gun with which to zap your opponents.

We got a tight, bright, fun, playable game that didn't take itself too seriously. Tanya ran up and delivered a fun grenade with RA2 that had people jumping all over it.



Serious Sam



Developer: Croteam
PCPP: 60
Our Score: 81%

We said: "Unreconstructed FPS hilarity."
Why John Coleman voted for it: "Ultimate FPS. If it moves: shoot it. If it doesn't: blow it up! Amazing graphics."

And the ring said to Samwise, he could be anything and Samwise thought that he could be the gardener of the whole world ... seriously ... that's what tempted him. Oh ... not that Sam? Riiiiight.

Oh, the Sam with the huge ... arsenal and round shades. That Sam. The all-America Sam fighting skeleton horses with rocket launchers, aliens and general unspeakable horrors; not one or two at a time like those panty-wastes Gordon Freeman or even the Duke, but hundreds at once like a real man.

There are no civilians to worry about in Serious Sam, just swarm after swarm of charging evil that needs to be sent right back

to the outer suburbs from whence it came. Sam gives gamers what they have been missing since shooters got all hoity-toity and intellectual: pure run and gun action ... with a host of oddball references thrown in to distract you with smiling while you really need to be running and gunning.

Just try and find this level of gunplay anywhere else. Put in any story and this volume of mayhem just becomes ridiculous. Leave things ridiculous and the sky is the limit.

Sam is fun, Sam is pure, Sam is good. Sam is seriously loved.





Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction

Developer: Blizzard
PCPP: 63
Our Score: 90%

We said: "It's a pity that LoD is only an expansion."
Why Sam Solar-Bassett voted for it: "It's easy to take control of your character, excellent cinematics and themes."

There is just something about Diablo.

It's not the most innovative game in the world, the graphics are only so-so, the gameplay is along the "click, click and repeat" variety but there is just something about it.

I think Blizzard lace it with something (some would say fun, but I think there's something funny lacing that fun, my friend). Then they bump up the milligrams when people talk about quitting. Lord of Dest is a concentrated, near OD in a collector's box, dose of whatever Blizzard use to hook new users.

LoD voters hardly knew what hit them. The Druid and the Assassin were new character

classes. Both were powerful and the Assassin had big leather boots, martial arts and sex appeal. The Druid had pets, could turn into a werebear and had a host of unusual spells ranging from summoning blizzards to throwing balls of lava.

Then there were new items, new monsters, greater diversity for the classes, new high-end abilities to explore and a whole new chapter.

For those poor creatures tied to their machine playing D2 over and over, these additions became a welcome breath of fresh air and added new ways to cream each other on Battlenet.



Civilization 3

Developer: Firaxis
PCPP: 68
Our Score: 95%

We said: "Countless refinements to an amazing formula makes Civilization III the finest turn based strategy game ever."

Why Chris Eaton voted for it: "It had to live up to the highest expectations, tall order. Well done."

People still talk in hushed tones when they mention Civ 2. Normally, people roll their eyes when the word masterpiece is used generally you can get away with it with a clear conscience with Civ 2. Now, there have been numerous games spawned and copied from Civ 2 but none have had the audacity to claim the title of Civ 3. Only Sid Meier's company would dare it. Well, they dared and they pulled it off.

Civ 3 refined what was already an amazing design. It looks prettier, introduces new victory conditions, frees up diplomacy,

adds cultural influence and streamlines play so it actually feels easier to play and enjoy.

All this contributes to making Civ 3 a powerhouse contender, but the real secret is the level of depth to the game. This is a quiet depth that doesn't wave banners or scream at you but just lets you start a simple game and get lost in it for hours. Civ 3, the mighty turn-based game conquered more hearts than any crowd-pleasing real-time strategy, this year, to come in #3.



Max Payne

Developer: Remedy
PCPP: 65
Our Score: 84%

We said: "Solid, polished shooter that has its occasional moments, but fails to live up to the hype."
Why Rob Goli voted for it: "Turned the simple concept of blowing everyone away into something special. Bullet time rocks!"

Max is a cop they pushed too far. He's on the run. He's a walking cliché with an awful lot of guns and a desire to use them two at a time. Revenge is the key word to sum up the plot, and as a Charles-Bronsonesque instrument of retribution Max's days and, more often, nights are filled with flying lead.

As Max takes on whole drug cartels and dozens of thugs with only his simmering anger and superhuman skills to keep him alive. You see, in times of extreme pressure Max can leap into action-movie brilliance and battle in a state beyond John Woo slow motion ... he can perpetrate Matrix-style bullet time.

While time seems to almost stand still Max can line up and pop shots off that, when time starts, leaves strings of bodies hitting the floor before the last of his casings finish falling.

The movie connections don't end there, as you'll see as soon as you start leaping, sliding and rolling, guns blazing (Shootdodging) in a graceful manner that should send Woo reaching for his copyright lawyer's mobile number.

Fast action-movie gunplay and bullet time made for a visceral cinematic experience that is hard to top.





Operation Flashpoint

Developer:

Bohemia Interactive

PCPP: 64

Our Score: 94%

We said:

"War has never been so much Fun."

Why Toni Petrucci voted for it: "Perfect balance between realism and fun."

This could be the game of the year."

Those were the closing words of James Cottee's Operation Flashpoint review. It was a big call and right on the money. I've met James, he's a clever guy, and he called it. Then again, Operation Flashpoint is a special game, no doubt. A Game Of The Year game. Operation Flashpoint sinks players into the action like never before.

Some many separate elements come together to make this game stand out and take the honours. Many games, especially shooters, just get down to business and tell the story with the bare minimum of extras. This was far from the case with Flashpoint. It's the detail that blew gamers away and took them into the world of the mid-80s cold war reaching flashpoint.

Radio chatter, tyre tracks left on the roads, working odometers, villages that seem to be alive with people, expressions on your comrades faces and a host of other details bring the world of Flashpoint to life.

Allied troops charging past you to find cover, realistic weapons, chaotic fire fights, huge environments, long engagement ranges, limited kit and the threat of one shot kills left players with a lasting taste of what a combat zone would really be like.

Then there is the tight gameplay and combat mechanics. You even have the two elements of the rifle sight represented in your crosshairs, crosshairs that become focused only when you are still and which make shooting on the run a proposition best left to Mr Payne.

Beyond that, there is the advancement up the ranks, the detailed planning phase to nail down objectives, possible load-outs and

zoom function on the contour maps.

Finally, you have the huge range of tactical and gameplay options of being able to man almost any type of vehicle imaginable from gunships to PT patrol boats and tractors. If there's a gunner aboard players can switch between shooting and driving with a keystroke and every vehicle, while retaining some character, follows the basic control scheme of the game making piloting a hands-on and accessible option.

The huge maps, detailed landscapes and the ability to use any weapon or vehicle around make Flashpoint's missions incredibly open affairs. Many readers wrote in and complimented the game on a good six months worth of mission play. That's without the editor and the almost limitless modding options that a game of this scope and extra detail allows.

In a top 10 list that features games which are a reaction away from serious and realist gaming like Serious Sam, No One Lives Forever and even Max Payne, it's interesting that a game like Operation Flashpoint not only captured the vote of the hardcore wargamers but also of the more casual gamer, impressed by atmosphere and straight-up quality game design.

For its realistic take on the world, immersive take on combat - complete with bullets whizzing past and a healthy dose of chaos - as well as the huge scope of the game that fires the imagination for mods and add-ons, Operation Flashpoint has taken on all-comers and crawled out alive.

Congratulations, Bohemia Interactive you've produced our reader's Game Of The Year.



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The most authoritative reviews around

It has Arrived. The Chris Taylor epic that promised to change the way we played RPGs. No load screens! Stunning 3D world! ... No Load Screens! These promises proved to be prophetic because the game is beautiful and endless - but it's a single line to the final boss (whoever that might be). Our most bitter cynic in the office proclaimed it, "The most advanced screensaver in the world", explaining that if set to Most Aggressive AI, your character would fight her own way through the entire game. We tried it and This is Not True.

Whatever our judgment of Dungeon Siege (turn the page if you please), ultimately its greatest impact on the games world will be seen in products using the Siege Engine. Imagine a stunning 3D setting for games like Fallout, Baldur's Gate or, dare I say, Planescape: Torment. There's word already of the rebirthing of some Ultima classics. We truly live in the era of the Games Engine, where the technology is at least as important as (if not more than) the game itself: LithTech, Quake III, Unreal Warfare. The Siege Engine will live amongst them.

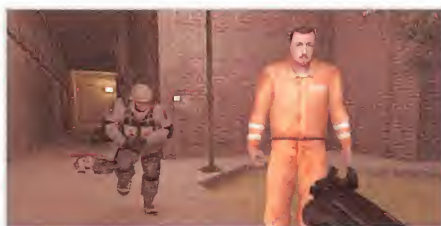
More innovative in game terms, is Freedom Force. Made in little old Canberra by Irrational Games, this has been eagerly anticipated in these offices and around the world it seems, for some time. Now, here it is in all its RPG-action glory, complete with intentionally shockin' voice acting, more cheese than Cheese in a Can and a wholesome message for God-fearing citizens. Take an Energy X power drink and away you go.

While Powerplay never had many kind words for Max Payne, we can safely say that the PC version is streets ahead of its Xbox equivalent. In contrast, Tony Hawk 3 is the Xbox triumph of the month, being everything your green box needs.

Which reminds me, those who've not partaken in an Xbox LAN really need to find some like-minded friends. The Halo romp I attended the other night was a damn hoot. As those Warthogs slid around with three people in each, the lust for more Microsoft product welled within me.

Finally, this is my last issue as Deputy Editor. A warm thanks to all the people I've worked and corresponded with, it's been a pleasure. Farewell.

John Dewhurst
johnd@next.com.au



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- 81 Ultimate Fighting Championship
- Jet Set Radio Future

THE PCPP REVIEW SCORING SYSTEM

90+	Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
89-80	A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
79-60	Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
59-40	Decidedly average, probably boring.
39-0	A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.
Need	The minimum requirements to get the game running at a playable speed.
Want	The ideal system requirements for the game.
For	The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.
Against	The major reasons why you won't.



Dungeon Siege

A classic case of Diablo2 with a side-order of Quake syndrome

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Gas Powered

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

MA15+

AVAILABLE

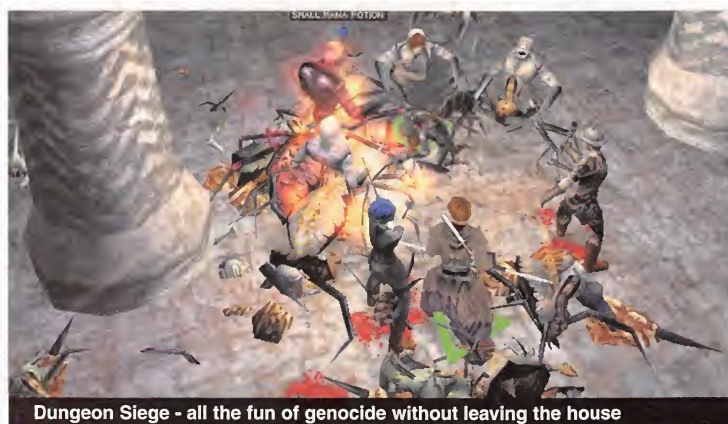
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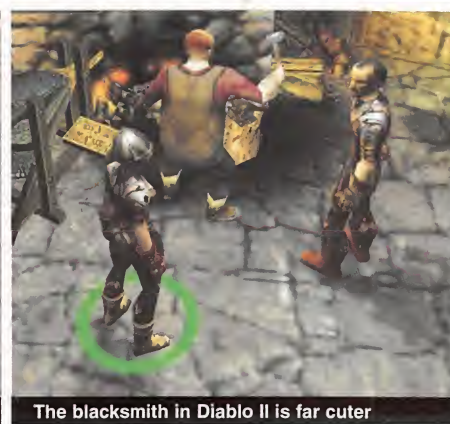
Shoulder to shoulder our heroes make a last stand...



...but instead end up partying like it's 1999



Dungeon Siege - all the fun of genocide without leaving the house



The blacksmith in Diablo II is far cuter

SYSTEM

NEED

P3-500

64Mb RAM

32Mb GeForce2

videocard

1.2Gb HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1500+

128Mb RAM

GeForce3

1.2Gb HDD

From the creators of Total

Annihilation comes Dungeon Siege, which like TA takes an established game model, adds a stunning 3D engine and greatly streamlines the gaming experience. But in some ways Dungeon Siege is more of a tech demo than an actual game; focused as it is on the graphics, the game occasionally finds itself lacking in areas that made Diablo2 a classic.

Dungeon Siege seeks to eliminate the disruptive nature of PC gaming's ubiquitous loading screen and succeeds in this task admirably. The only time a loading screen is encountered is at the very beginning of a gaming session when the game world is initialised. After this wait, the game world is streamed onto the screen with neither hitch nor hiccup. The impression of a real, living world is quite pronounced and graphically the game is nothing short of lush.

Farm girl rides again

The player begins on a farm, complete with burnt out homestead, ravaged wheat fields, broken wagons

and ploughshares and even a rickety little bridge over a stream. Out of the mist charge misshapen goblin-like creatures called the Krug, which are easily dispatched with a weapon as primitive as a club with a nail through it. Barrels scattered near the homestead, clearly looted by the Krug, can be broken open to reveal gold or useful items. A quick stroll across the wheat fields and it's down into the forest. Giant trees dwarf the player, and stir in the stiff breeze. An innocuous bush by the side of the path suddenly thrashes back and forth and a wolf or Krug dog rushes out, only to be splattered by a club or a primitive first-level spell.

"The impression of a real, breathing world is quite pronounced..."

Deeper in the forest, occasional sunbeams stream down onto mossy deadfalls. Ancient, overgrown statues loom from the mist like ghosts, and tiny faeries light the way to secret areas and unique items. Eventually, the player comes to the bridge to Stonebridge, and finding it burnt out by

the Krug, continues on to the Crypts, hoping to find an alternate route to the town. Eventually, the entrance to the Crypts appears and the game world switches smoothly from open countryside to the claustrophobic confines of a dungeon. The ground fades away as the player descends, revealing damp walls and thick cobwebs, complete with skeletons slumped in the corners. Then those skeletons rise up and attack...

Pretty face, no brain?

The level of visual detail in the game is, as you can see, astonishing. No dungeon-hack game has ever looked this good. GPG's mission to create the

best looking game of this type is a resounding success, but unfortunately the developer does not fare as well in other areas.

Diablo2's strength was not in its graphics. Running only in 640x480 mode it did not attempt to compete with other, flashier titles and instead

133+ INTERFACE



GPG has done much to improve the ergonomics of a standard RPG interface, offering such things as floating inventories that can be sorted with the click of a single button, hotkeys for all major commands and the ability to have all party inventories open at once to facilitate swapping of items. Pickup of items can be automated and as mentioned elsewhere, party AI can be adjusted. However, GPG seems to have stopped short of the ultimate interface - the Quake console. By giving players access to low-level commands in the game, we could do such things as increase the rate of camera rotation, allowing us to better respond to sudden attacks from behind, adjust the spacing of party formations (tight wedges versus loose wedges etc) and hundreds of other tiny tweaks that seem obvious as you play. We know this console exists; we saw Chris Taylor using it at the launch. It remains for a mod team or other developer to unlock the true power of the engine and provide the Quake of RPG games to us, the drooling legions of the 133+.



The bubble boy skeleton in the back no longer feels left out of the fun



Angry with the Dungoens and Dragons movie, Draco reaps bloody revenge

concentrated carefully on character development and gameplay balance. While Dungeon Siege surpasses Diablo2 in visual quality it must alas take second place to the older game's meat and potatoes - the gameplay.

Much has been made of the dynamic character development in Dungeon Siege and indeed at lower levels this dynamic development is most welcome. Rather than selecting a character from a list, the player simply begins the game, and then by virtue of their actions develops into a particular class of character. So a player who uses melee weapons exclusively becomes a warrior, one who uses bows becomes an archer, and there are two types of magic as well, combat and nature magic.

Unfortunately this is all. There are four distinct character paths to follow, but of course these four can be mixed and matched at will. The problem arises when it becomes clear that at no point will the future possibilities of a character be communicated to the player. In Diablo2, the player could see the future skill upgrade options available, and see descriptions of

those skills, and would therefore continually have to make the decision whether or not to spend skill points on upgrading a current skill or learning a new skill. So while the character classes were set, the variety within each class was quite vast.

Dungeon Siege on the other hand gives no such information. New spells or weapons are found from time to time, and can only be equipped when the character reaches a certain level, but their descriptions are lacklustre and after a while all that needs to be noted is the damage that each spell or weapon does.

Baby, you ain't special

Special items are nothing to write home about. They add modifiers to attack damage, defence, armour and other RPG standards, but no item seems to have any actual special abilities. Even obvious abilities such as freeze, transform or bonus hit haven't been included.

Diablo2 was as much a collecting game as it was an action RPG. Side quests would reward the player with unique items from a massive library. In

Dungeon Siege, a unique item is basically a standard item with a few modifiers associated with it.

However, the biggest flaw with Dungeon Siege's characters is that each character can only do one thing at a time. Where in Diablo2 it was possible to attack with the left mouse button and cast spells or use skills with the right, in Dungeon Siege there is only attack. Magic users cannot use weapons and spells at the same time, and fighters and archers can only use a single equipped weapon - they have no special skills at all. No dodges, no battlecries, no healing abilities, nothing. On the other hand, the characters are not meant to have distinct classes, so it is possible to have a character who uses melee weapons mostly and one or two low-level combat magic spells. Character mixing would have been more effective however if abilities were item-based instead of discipline-based, so a character could be high-level with, say, hunting bows and the fireball spell, and pretty good with bladed weapons, instead of having to either specialise in melee fighting, or split



Quiet rural towns can only harbour EVIL!



"We needs us some pack animals"



The larger the party the more interesting the combat

CAMERA OBSCURA



How is *Dungeon Siege* able to stream a gameworld without loading screens? By severely restricting the player's field of view, that's how. The camera is locked permanently on the character selected and rotates around them. The angle of tilt is limited to a field of about 70 degrees from the perpendicular. This means that at the flattest angle, it's only possible to see maybe the equivalent of fifty or so metres ahead. *Dungeon Siege*'s scenery is impressive, but it is unable to properly shine because of the tight camera.

experience points between melee and combat magic or even attempt to be a Jack-of-all-trades.

Dynamo Joe's big party!

While dynamic character classing works great for casual and action gamers, RPG-heads may find the experience frustrating as it is very difficult to develop a complex character using the system in *Dungeon Siege*. RPG fanatics may find sticking to a single discipline and grabbing new spells or weapons where available a rather unsatisfying experience, and a multi-classing seems to do little more than retard character development and make later parts of the game more difficult.

Party size is where *Dungeon Siege* makes up some lost ground. It is possible to have a total of eight party members and two pack mules, so battles are suitably grand in scale and with a selection of suitable high-powered weapons and spells, the gibs fountain outward in satisfying red geysers. While this does put quite a bit of strain on modest systems and leads to jerkiness and slowdown, it

nevertheless provides a visceral gaming experience that the 2D graphics of *Diablo2* occasionally missed.

Monsters are plentiful, even on the Easy game setting, and there is a constant variety of creatures, with many variations on each basic monster type. Monsters use the same disciplines as characters so it is possible to encounter melee, ranged, combat-magic and nature-magic using monsters, often all in the same location. The 3D models are little short of astounding and on the closest zoom have excellent level of detail and maintain the generally immersive abilities of the game engine.

Boss Hog's devious plot

Like in *Diablo2*, monsters drop items and gold which can then dutifully be collected, and there are frequent miniboss monsters (denoted by a streaming coloured light coming from above) who usually guard a special item or carry lots of gold. Each dungeon or game area also has an associated boss monster and these are extremely varied and really show off the game's ability with character

models. Since there are no restrictions on model size, some of the bosses are absolutely huge and include such favourites as giant spiders, dragons, gargoyles, and there is even a giant steam-powered mech, piloted by a troublesome goblin.

The plot of *Dungeon Siege*, on the other hand, is quite disappointing. Development and progression is slow and there is no real background for the main player character, other than the fact they are a farmhand who has had their life destroyed by the Krug. The occasional historical journals that are dotted around the place are disappointingly simplistic and show none of the detailed backstory that exists in, you guessed it, *Diablo2*. So don't expect to see too much *Dungeon Siege* fan fiction.

Because of the somewhat weak story, *Dungeon Siege* is definitely positioned as an action game and has little to engage RPG gamers who might not be easily swayed by pretty graphics. *Dungeon Siege* is in some ways like the original *Quake* - one of the most impressive game engines seen in a long time, but lacking

DUMB DUMBS

Developers really need to stop big-noting their AI until they actually have some. While hype of Dungeon Siege's AI was impressive, the actual behaviour of player characters isn't. Early concerns about the amount of automation in the game prove unfounded, as characters will happily stand by and watch their comrades get slaughtered even while set to 'attack freely'. Characters seem to have trouble identifying enemies as threats and will not rush to engage even nearby foes. This is okay though, because nearby foes will usually ignore the player characters until they trip some trigger area or attack them. However, this problem plagues most games that require player-character AI, so it's nothing we should be surprised about.



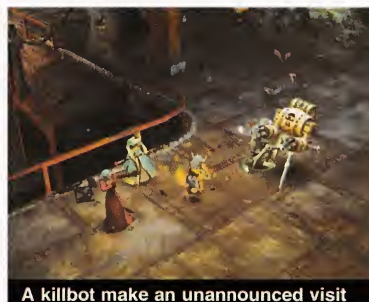
More inventory than screen



Best donkey shows outside Tijuana



Armoured fish/lizard things



A killbot make an unannounced visit



Not just dungeons but cities as well

UNDERGROUND OVERGROUND

These screenshots better illustrate the Siege engine's impressive ability to move from an overground environment into a dungeon setting. The cleverest thing about this is the lighting and how the draw-distance changes dynamically. It's not perfect however; if you time your emergence from a dungeon carefully, you can see the lighting system change suddenly from a black distance-fog to the more usual overground grey fog. Crazy!



Transitioning between dungeon and surface

somewhat as a singleplayer (and in this case, even multiplayer) experience. Combine Dungeon Siege and Diablo2 and you have what is very nearly the perfect action-RPG. But Dungeon Siege on its own is, all said and done, a technology test with a fairly decent if unspectacular game built into it.

Mod this!

It is what people will do with the Dungeon Siege engine that is most impressive. GPG promised the Siege Editor would ship with the game, but our gold master review copy did not appear to have the editor on it, so we were unable to examine the modding potential. However, an earlier PCPP interview with Chris Taylor, lead developer on the title, revealed that Dungeon Siege has been designed from the ground up to accommodate modders in every way. It will apparently be possible to modify the existing Dungeon Siege environments or create entirely new ones, although this process will be more like creating a Quake3 level rather than, say, a Starcraft map.

Which brings us neatly to the subject of level design and flow.

Dungeon Siege, like games such as RTCW and Alice, is completely linear in level design. The player begins at point A and runs in what is effectively a straight line until point B. There is the occasional corner or side chamber, but there are no locked doors and for the most part it is not necessary to ever backtrack. This has a noticeably negative effect on gameplay, because while 90% of game time involves uncovering new territory, the very occasional backtracking that is required feels frustrating and chore-like. This also means that none of the locations gain much of a sense of identity - the first town, Stonebridge, is past the player in a flash, buy some weapons, buy a mule, and then goodbye.

NPC, you bore me

NPC interaction is also basic, as there is no branching conversation system and it's not even practically possible to decline a quest. If you decline a major, plot-central quest, the NPC who is offering it to you simply doesn't join your party, but the linear nature of the levels means you have to

undertake that quest anyway.

So Dungeon Siege is a classic case of buyer beware. For a beautiful, violent and crisp action gaming experience, snap this title up immediately. For anything even approaching an RPG, look elsewhere but don't go too far past Diablo2. If you want to buy the game just to mod it, then add five points to the score. The graphics engine cannot be faulted, it is the best for this type of game. The game itself however, isn't.

Anthony Fordham



Troll + Bridge = cliché

RATING

FOR

- Powerful 3D engine
- Fluid combat
- Atmosphere

AGAINST

- Simplistic
- Limited special items
- Not an RPG

OVERALL

A stunning technology test let down by a simple game. Still plenty here to keep you entertained though

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Freedom Force

Hitting evil in the face with a compact car



DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Irrational Games!

PUBLISHER

EA

DISTRIBUTOR

EA

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

PG

AVAILABLE

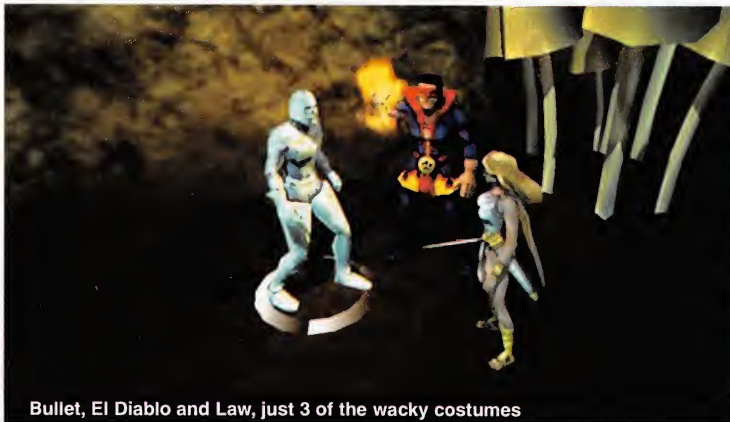
Now



Things can be heavy underground



The inevitable outcome of too many tacos for lunch



Bullet, El Diablo and Law, just 3 of the wacky costumes



Glasses designed by Elton John

SYSTEM

NEED

P233 MMX
16Mb RAM
4Mb Videocard
150Mb HDD

WANT

P233 MMX
16Mb RAM
4Mb Videocard
150Mb HDD

It's all to rare that a game gets everything right - perfect graphics, sound, gameplay and design but Irrational games have managed to do just that with their latest opus, Freedom Force. Leaping to action with colours so bright and garish that they can literally burn your eyes, Freedom Force walks the fine line between tribute and parody and manages to succeed in both. Players take the role of the stalwart protectors of Patriot City, the Freedom Force, a group of once ordinary law abiding citizens given fantastic powers by the strange alien power source "Energy X". To cap it all of the game features a wonderfully four-colour apocalyptic story line detailing the nefarious exploits of the evil Lord Dominion, a dimension straddling despot with plans for total domination. This game has personality, and loads of it. It's the first great super hero game on the market, and hopefully not the last.

From the first introduction to the last panel Freedom Force fairly oozes with silver age comic book style. Missions are introduced by an omniscient narrator very much in the

mould of the voice over in the Batman TV series or Stan Lee's own introductions of the Spider-Man cartoons. The heroes all wear outlandishly coloured battle garb and every sentence seems to end with an exclamation mark. When you hit someone a speech bubble pops up with such wonderful onomatopoeia as "Ka-Foom" or "Fwoosh". In short Freedom Force is about as faithful a representation of silver age comics as you can get without inventing a way-back machine, travelling to the past and befriending Jack Kirby.

"Freedom Force is about as faithful a representation of silver age comics as you can get..."

The first character we are introduced to is the elderly Frank Stiles, a man who worked on the Manhattan Project. Anyone with a love of comics may start thinking that he will eventually go all Bruce Banner on us and turn into the Hulk but you'd be wrong. After being shot by an evil (that's EEEEEVVVIIIIILL) communist he is struck by a strange energy bean

transforming him into The Minuteman, a Captain America like hero. Soon the red, white and blue crusader is joined by other like minded individuals and the worlds first super team is formed. From then on things get interesting with the characters bickering amongst themselves, fighting personal demon and maybe even a little hint of romance - the stuff good comics are made of. As far as back-story is concerned you have it all - forbidden love, betrayal, fear, honour, group rivalry. You name it you can probably find it.

The game itself revolves around small unit tactical battles against the menaces that threaten stately Patriot City and eventually even the planet Earth itself. Before each mission the player is given the opportunity to make up to a four-person super-team. The missions usually take the form of beating up and interrogating a number of low level thugs or protecting various people of objects.



Does the name Custer mean anything to you, Sparky?

SUPER SAYINGS!

Aside from prefacing every sentence with a 3/4 profile and ending them with an exclamation point, all of the heroes in Freedom Force have a few choice sayings they pull out from time to time to amuse us all. No Super Hero game would be complete without a cavalcade of heroic aphorisms - here are some of our favourites:

Minuteman - "Right makes might!" or "For Freedom!"

Mentor - "By the moons of Rekshaw!"

Man-Bot - (right before laying the smack down) "I don't want to do this!"

El Diablo - (right before shooting a flame blast) "Soup's on!"

There are more of these little gems but you'll just have to discover them for yourself.

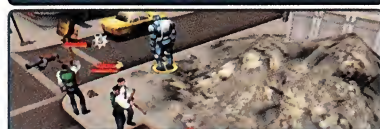


Alchemiss does her best Sheera impersonation



On the Island of Pan the toilets are well defended

SUPER SKIRMISH!



Like most modern games, Freedom Force comes packages with a multiplayer mode. Players (either online or on LAN) choose their heroes based on a number of prestige points (30,000 being the default) and duke it out to the last man standing. Multiplayer is fun for a while and gives you a good opportunity to show off your own character creations but is fairly weak when compared to the single player campaign. Irrational Games have promised that there will be a patch available soon which will improve the multiplayer game with a skirmish option. We have but to wait.

Occasionally the heroes will come up against a super-villain (boss character) and things will get really sticky. As the game progresses the player has the opportunity to recruit other characters into the ranks of Freedom Force, some of these are

introduced in scenarios and others can be created by the player. Although the goals of the majority of the scenarios remain the same the number of heroes and villains present as well as the compelling plot keep things from getting stale.

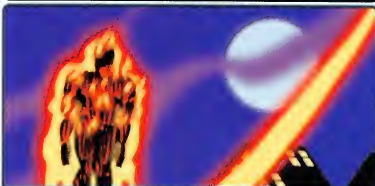
The interface is simplicity itself not requiring anything more complex than right clicking on the heroes or targets to issue orders by way of a drop down menu. Most characters have access to ranged, melee and protection powers and you need to get to know these powers well if you hope to defeat the myriad foes that oppose the Force. When issuing orders the players have the option to use attack powers, movement powers, defense powers and special powers, each needing a number of power points to function. Carefully balancing the number of power points the character has is one of the most strategically important factors in the game - there's no point in teleporting close to a villain to attack when you have no power left to attack.

As with any game, practice makes perfect and luckily for us dear reader, Freedom Force comes with one of the

best training function we've seen in recent years. Dotted throughout the various levels at the beginning of the game are rotating Freedom Force insignias. Clicking on them will cause the narrator to give a little bit of advice as to how to play the game. Advice can range from how to issue orders to how to best level up characters. The best feature of the trainer is that you don't need to interact with it at all - if you don't click on the icon you can keep playing the game as normal without any hitches. After playing so many games in which the training screens are obtrusive and mandatory it's nice to see a game where you can ignore training and just jump right in.

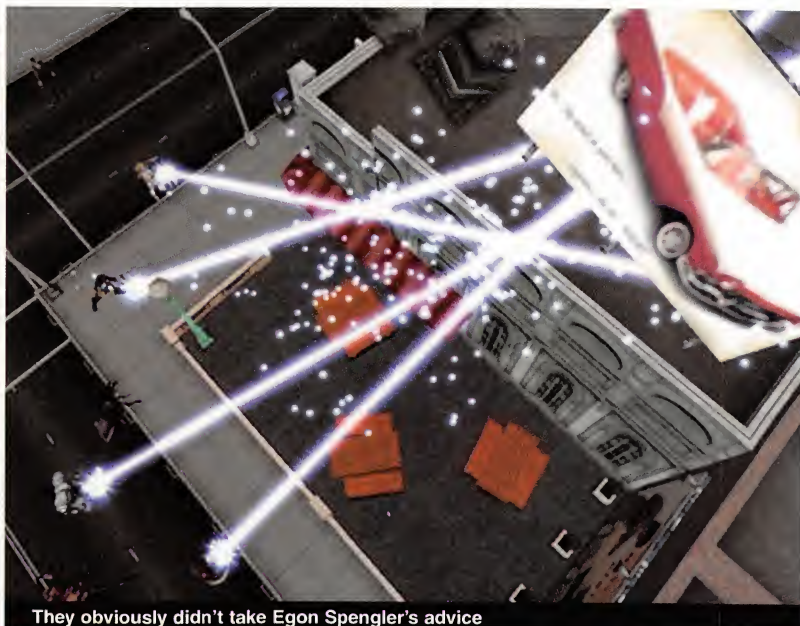
After the first few simple missions the game really heats up with the inclusion of the first superhuman foes. These guys are usually roughly on par with the heroes as far as power goes and have access to a large number of minions so as you can imagine combats get pretty hard pretty quick. Though Freedom Force has the trappings of an RPG it is really a strategy game at heart. Seemingly simple at first it soon becomes

SUPER SKINS



If you don't like any of the character skins available in the character generation screen then you can always make your own using the Irrational games skinning tool or failing that you can look online and find thousands of skins for all your comic book characters. The best places to look for skins are:

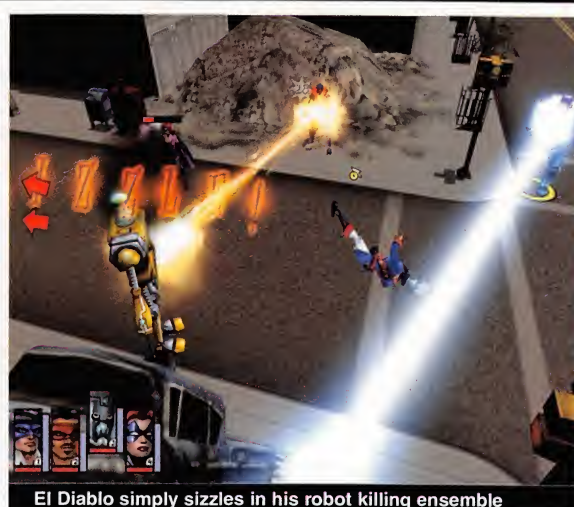
www.freedomforcecenter.com/
www.skindex.net/fff/main.htm
<http://monsterskins.cjb.net/>
www.freedomforce.net



They obviously didn't take Egon Spengler's advice



It's all fun and games until someone blows up a truck



El Diablo simply sizzles in his robot killing ensemble

apparent that the combat system has a surprising amount of depth and strategic content. One reason for this is the fact that the vast majority of landscapes are interactive and that the game has an active physics engine. Without using the environment you can hit people all you like and shoot energy beams at them but it's far more satisfying (and useful) to use the terrain to your advantage. With a little practice you'll be knocking people off buildings or in front of oncoming cars for extra damage, batting around multiple foes with streetlights and using different height levels to get the upper (pun intended) hand on your enemies.

The other major factor necessitating strategic thinking is the physics engine. Simply put the engine treats every object on the map as an obstacle so there's no way to turn off friendly fire. If a character gets in the way of a friendly attack it's more than likely they'll get hit, and there's nothing more embarrassing than KO'ing your own characters. Because the actions take place in real time with the only pauses being player designated when issuing orders it is of tantamount

importance to know where your heroes are at all times. It's all too easy to run them into the field of fire or knock down a building by mistake.

At the culmination the player is rewarded in two ways, with experience points and prestige points. All members of Freedom Force are awarded experience points at the end of a mission though the characters that actually went on the mission receive more. When a certain threshold is achieved characters can advance in level and are given a number of character points. These points can be spent on leveling up existing powers or for buying new powers and abilities. This RPG like character progression system allows for a lot of customisation in characters. Through judicious use of points you can make a character a relatively weak but well-rounded individual or atomic powerhouse capable of leveling buildings with a single blow of his mighty fist. Prestige points allow the player to recruit new and interesting heroes into the Freedom Force. The more powerful the character the more prestige they cost.

Prestige is earned by achieving objectives and capturing bad-guys. Conversely and damage caused by your heroes during the battle can cause you to lose prestige.

If none of the built-in characters of Freedom Force float your boat then a built in character generator is right up your alley. The character generator comes with 10 odd character skins but literally thousands more can be found on line with a little searching. Aside from the skins, players can choose powers and power effects making nearly any hero they can imagine. Be warned; the more powerful the character you make the more prestige they cost to recruit, so it may be some time into the game before you can see your hero in action.

Freedom Force is a glory to behold, presenting us with a bright and beautiful world populated by garishly costumed individuals and towering monoliths in tribute to the inherent goodness of democracy. All of the various characters are well animated and the wide arrays of powers are spectacular to look at. Added bonuses for comic book fans



"Don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I'm angry"



Sexual tension of the most garish kind



Man-Bot take the lull in the fighting as an opportunity to show off his "buns of steel"

SUPER SEQUELS



The good news for anyone who love super heroes and Irrational Games (and who doesn't) is that the Australian Design company have promised there will be an expansion pack due out around the end of the year and at least 2 sequels on the way. The proposed sequels will take place around the 70's/80's and modern day respectively and should probably have a slightly darker tone than Freedom Force. Rest assured that your favourite team of super geeks, the PCPP crew will bring you all the news as it comes.

are the "Secret Origin" animations that come in the introduction of each new character. Static for the most part but slightly animated to give the panels some movement the animations bring the world of silver age comics to life. The origins range from tragic to outlandishly funny but all are wonderfully coloured and simply drawn. Unfortunately the frequent cut-scenes in the game aren't rendered in the same style as the origin films, instead opting to use the graphics engine to render 3D animations of the heroes. These animations still look great but they lack the flavour and nostalgic appeal of the flat panels. The graphics engine also allows the player to zoom in and out of the maps to better plan their assaults.

If anything the sound of Freedom Force is even better than the graphics and adds a huge amount to the overall comic-book goodness of the game. All of the built in characters come with excellently delivered dialogue ranging from the typical super-hero aphorism to some far more subtle fare. No matter what is being said you can rest assured that the amount of overacting and

ridiculous accents remains the guiding factor. Accents range from cheesy Yankee to southern bell, trailer trash hick, Brooklyn mobster, evil Russian, Hispanic love god, evil alien and much much more. Never once does the voice acting falter and the accents remain constant throughout. To further add to the ambiance is a great soundtrack that compliments the action perfectly. Tracks range from character specific themes to bombastic scores perfect for dominating the world. As the game is set in a kind of nebulous timescape ranging in style from the 40's to the 60's much of the music has themes to match. Don't be surprised to hear bongo drums. The various incidental noises are also superb. If you're fighting in the City centre expect to hear honking horns, cars crashing or skidding to avoid bowling over combatants and people running and screaming in fear.

Unfortunately there are a few little glitches in Freedom Force that need to be mentioned. In many of the missions it is absolutely vital to interrogate thugs, minions or bosses to find out what nefarious crimes are about to be perpetrated or where the heroes should

look next. Sadly, sometimes this is not possible. On occasion during testing we were not able to interrogate people for two reasons - sometimes it just wouldn't let us and at others the suspect in question was inaccessible. On occasion during different missions instead of interrogating a suspect the heroes would instead keep hitting them. A restart of the mission usually cleared this up but the frustration of having to do things over and over again mounted. We also found that strong explosive or knockback attacks could literally knock people off the screen. Whilst this is kind of funny it also effectively ends the mission because you can no longer interrogate or talk to them.

At first simple but becoming harder with each successive stage, Freedom Force is the first great super-hero game to be released on the PC. Comic book fans will be in paroxysms of delight watching costumed crusaders clobber each other into submission. Luckily for everyone else, Freedom Force is readily accessible to those who have never read a comic in their life being just about the perfect strategy experience.

Daniel Wilks

RATING

FOR

- Super Heroes
- Amazing sound
- Create your own heroes

AGAINST

- Slightly glitchy
- OK Multiplayer
- Sequel still a while off

OVERALL

Full of wonderful colour and dripping with style and charm, Freedom Force is a must have

94

Warrior Kings

The stunning debut of a first time developer

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Black Cactus

PUBLISHER

Microids

DISTRIBUTOR

Red Ant

PRICE

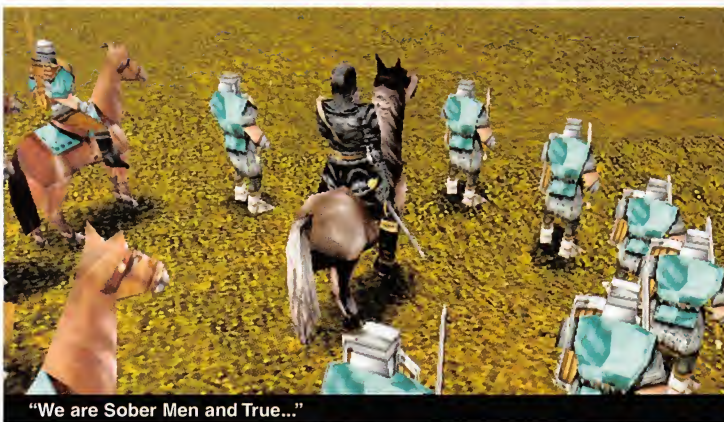
\$89.95

RATING

M15+

AVAILABLE

Now



SYSTEM

NEED

Win 9x/ME/XP/2K
PIII 400
128MB RAM
8Mb 3D
Videocard
900MB HDD

WANT

Athlon XP 1500+
128MB RAM
32MB 3D
Videocard

This epic RTS tale of reaping the whirlwind is Black Cactus' first game and it's obvious the Cactus had a vision. A vision of a huge RTS, in real 3D, where all terrain actually affects play. A vision where the armies start the same and then branch out to offer a unique experience. A vision of divine intervention on a massive scale and armies swarming across the screen. What's impressive is that they actually managed to paint this vision into a 3D game ... the only problem is that, while they were staring at the glorious majesty of it all, the Cactus' vision got a little blurry around the edges.

Visions of a massive 3D world

Warrior Kings renders its large game maps in undulating detail and fills it with hundreds of 3D warriors. Put simply, it's impressive. The buildings are a decent size - big enough to obscure line of sight - and the landscape is rarely flat or dull, giving you plenty of places to set up ambushes in tactical positions.

When the mighty zoom (which offers a surplus of magnification and distance at extremes) is employed, all of the little graphical details come to life. A lot of work

has gone into each character, weapon and building. Even in mass combat, swimming in detailed textures, everything runs like a prize stallion even on a fairly modest machine.

There are, however, some dodgy ground textures (there's some sort of pixelated-astro-turf thing going on in some areas) and simple razzle-dazzle elements like flames and the spells of your hero, Artos could have pushed the limits a little further ... but none of these things detract from the game.

There are some 3D issues which do, however. Even in my watchtower next to a small wall, my archers seemed intent on lobbing arrows in an

ground radar isn't quite at that level by the third mission. On the other hand, not having to scout every crevasse around your base is probably a blessing - something to do with fun over realism. Overall, glory be to the Warrior Kings 3D.

Vision of Three Armies

Shall you walk the path of righteousness and bathe in the glory of the Holy One? Will you walk the heretical dark paths of destruction and demonology? Or shall you forsake higher powers for science and reason? These are the three paths.

The Celestial army is the most defensive. They have heavy armour,

Large game maps rendered in undulating detail and filled with hundreds of 3D warriors.

indirect-fire manner instead of using the height of the tower. Maybe just firing down, fish-in-a-barrel style, was beneath them or something. (boom, boom -Ed.)

Sometimes my towers would also light up enemies on the other side of hills and fences and begin lobbing at them ... and, as far as I know, our

healing magicks and, at the high end, their priests can call down the wrath of God on their foes, from plagues to dropping Wormwood (whoa, getting biblical on their arses).

It's a good thing the game allows for such impressive castle building, with reinforced walls studded with towers, levels of garrisoned gatehouses and so



A Grim Day for Battle



What are they doing?



Building a Castle fit for a King



Outlying fields of our settlement

PATCHED UP AND READY



Once you have your copy of *Warrior Kings* please head over to www.warrior-kings.com and get the patch. I made the mistake of playing without it for a while and you don't need to repeat the experiment. The patch is a definite plus. I like little things like working sound and enemies who don't walk through sections of walls ... call me old-fashioned. You'll also want to download the key shortcuts, they're as useful as they are hard to find.

on. If it all sounds a tad defensive, the Celestials can also summon a flaming rep of the All Mighty when evil begs for divine smiting.

The Pagans have a lot of cannon fodder and access to expensive, but heavy-hitting, demons. If you like the idea of a hoard of nastiness anchored

by some choice other worldly help then Pagans are for you. Their doomsday device comes in the form of a large patron of the lower realms who loves intimate walks along the beach, brimstone and destruction.

The final army, the tech-heads, are slow getting going but then are mighty with their wondrous siege machines and gunpowder weapons. The height of their technology comes in the form of Rocket Towers. These towers are mobile but have to dig in before they can unleash their barrage of rocketry goodness. One-on-one, these towers are no match for a Demon Prince or Angel but they are easier to acquire and have oh so much more range.

All of the armies start from the same root units and hence one can get archers, spearmen and cavalry in the form of javelineers and squires. This has interesting implications for multiplayer games, as you won't have any idea what path your opponents are taking. If you risk a quick rush to take out a slow-starting technologist army you might suffer a crushing defeat at the hands of someone who decided to try the defensive, celestial, path instead.

Keeping standard units out to pick off spies and scouts will be a prudent move until you are ready to show your hand.

The Wagers of War

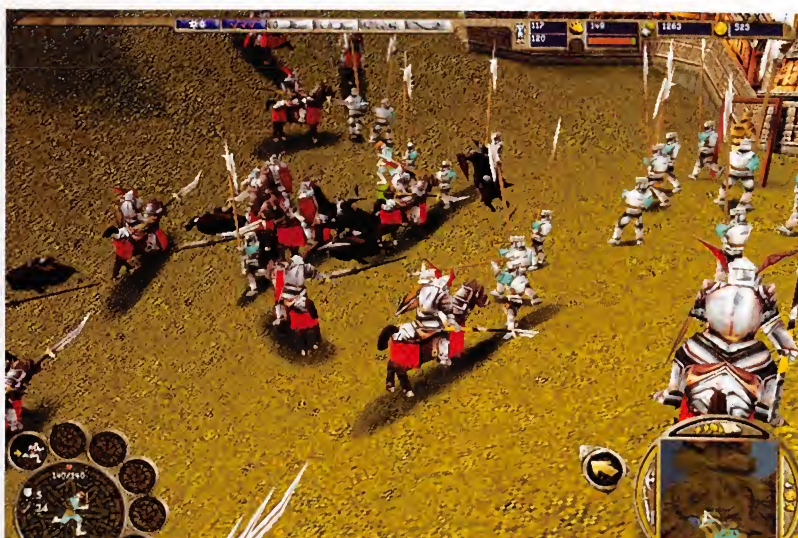
All of the units are well balanced, using the popular paper-scissors-rock model of interlocking superiority and weakness. The balancing goes beyond this and that's what makes *Warrior Kings* truly tactical. Heavy infantry (like pikemen) are hugely powerful against heavy cavalry but march so slowly that they drag a moving army to a crawl and have to be well placed so cavalry doesn't simply run rings around it.

Light Cavalry (mounted missile troops) go well against all comers (even light infantry which is its nemesis troop-type). Their mobility also makes light cavalry an ideal defensive force and fast attack group, but this is all offset by lacking anything good against even the lightest fortification.

Archers, on the other hand, are good all round, being fast, having a flame arrow attack to damage buildings and getting great bonuses from higher ground, but



Messages of War



Horror on the Battlefield



"Charge!"



Mounted Warriors held at bay

RATING

FOR

- Large fully-3D maps
- Well-balanced troops
- Tactics affect the outcome

AGAINST

- AI and pathing fail 10% of time
- Lacks some advanced control
- No quick action mode

OVERALL

A divine game that soars for the heavens while carrying infernal rough edges

84

they are very dependent on good placement, otherwise one cavalry squad, armoured infantry or better positioned missile troop will make short work of them.

Add formations affecting a unit's offence, defence and speed into the mix and you have a game which offers strong tactical warfare incorporating complimentary troop types, position, line of sight and mobility.

The Blur

There are a few unholy gremlins in Warrior Kings. For starters, there is no skirmish mode. If you want to jump in and have some high-powered fun you better hope there's a suitable multiplayer game about to start (although Gamespy support makes this a bit less of a hassle). For such a game it's a strange omission. Then there is code optimisation. Sure, my 566Hz machine isn't a screaming demon but it runs the game fine ... after several minutes of loading screen each time I leave or enter a mission. I hear a 1.4G processor cuts that time right down, though. Pathing has its ups and downs as does the combat AI; in fact, both are generally so good that flaws scream out.

Rapture

Occasionally, troops seem to go into insensible raptures, maybe as a side effect of seeing too many minor miracles. Spearmen will just stand there and be pelted by arrows while archers stand idle a little way off. Compounding the problem, the little alert circle on the mini-map just isn't enough to tell you whether your guard towers have it under control or whether well-placed archers are demolishing ranks of your reserves.

You can set units to "attack at will" or "stand ground", you can make them guard or follow another unit and patrol points, but more options would have been welcome.

With a game dependent on mixed troops, the ability to set formations of mixed forces would have been a godsend. Even the ability to set grouped units moving at the pace of the slowest unit would have been a boon. That way you could keep your archers safely behind your pikemen without having to separately direct each squad's movement in pedantic little jumps to keep them safe.

Hail to the King?

Warrior Kings has depth, a branching campaign that will keep you going for ages, tactics, and 3D splendour. The unit balance and combat tactics are big draws as is the relatively cheap material cost of walls ... giving those players with Arthurian complexes a lot of room to hang themselves with huge Camelot fortifications.

All of the elements are there in broad strokes working like a dream which makes you compare it to all of the legends in the strategy games field. When you do, you still get a sense for the glorious Cactus vision, but you also glimpse the absence of a certain years-of-experience polish ... like perfected control options, a skirmish mode (and maybe a map editor), speech for inter-character plot development and a handful of touches that are hardly noticeable but just leave a glow of refinement. Regardless Warrior Kings can hold its head high. Its strong tactical combat and glorious 3D world will draw new RTS fans into the fold.

Tim C. Best

GameCube

Xbox

PC

Playstation 2

Game Boy Advance

PSP

**YOUR GUIDE TO THE
FUTURE OF GAMING
AND BEYOND!**

HYPER

AUSTRALIA'S GAMING AUTHORITY

HOMM4

The franchise that just gets bigger and better...



DETAILS

DEVELOPER

New World Comp

PUBLISHER

3DO

DISTRIBUTOR

Take 2

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

MA 15+

AVAILABLE

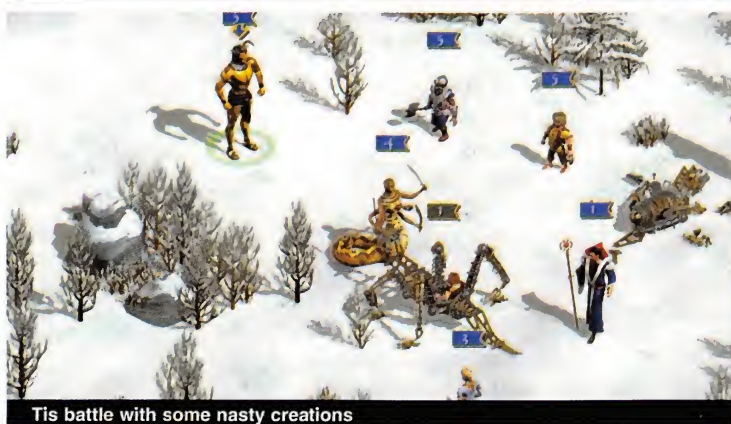
Now



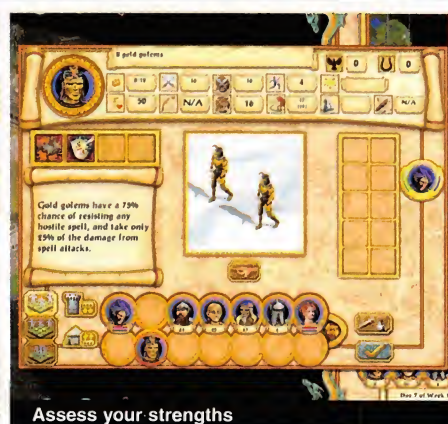
Level up! Yessssss



The Realm is vast and must be conquered



Tis battle with some nasty creations



Assess your strengths

SYSTEM

NEED

P II 300

128 MB RAM

750 MB HDD

4 MB DirectX

WANT

PIII 450

256 MB RAM

750 MB HDD

4MB DirectX

Rumours of the death of turn based strategy have been greatly exaggerated. While hardly the money-spinner it was before the dawn of the RTS, this exacting gaming genre has improved even as its ranks dwindle, producing extremely satisfying new games for the party faithful. Steel Panthers III, Civilization III, Europa Universalis II, and now Heroes of Might & Magic IV, a grand series of games that goes way back to the glory days of New World Computing, the same firm that brought us Nuclear War, and Celebrity Poker (with Jonathan Frakes!).

So you want to be a General

While the main line of Might & Magic games is the pure hack and slash romp, The Heroes series has taken the same worlds and principles and cast them on giant chess boards of strategic intrigue. Heroes IV evolves the principles behind the previous games, streamlining the interface, improving the graphics, and vastly expanding the options. It's heroic combat on an epic scale, and it works amazingly well.

The basic mission map is displayed via an isometric perspective. This

highly stylised view shows the major terrain elements, like deserts, forests and other impassable terrain, as well as any structures or locations, power-ups, and enemies. Friendly armies have a limited number of movement points each turn, and can only collect as many bonuses and run as many risks as movement allows. Neutral structures can be captured, unattended objects can be scooped up, and enemies confronted, but the exact makeup of an opposing force is never known until they're engaged.

Each army can contain up to seven

Meat for the grinder

Similarly, each expendable, stackable unit is essentially cannon fodder, to be replenished from a suitable recruiting station at the player's discretion. The RPG value of the game comes from the titular heroes, the only individual units that can increase their endurance and abilities through the course of a campaign. Standing behind the ranks of generic fantasy creatures, they can unleash spells to protect, destroy, confuse and heal. When the melee reaches them, they can cut swathes

The scope of this game is huge... six mammoth campaigns and 31 scenarios for one to six players

unit types, and is represented on the main map by the most powerful unit present. For the human player, this is typically the hero at the head of their army. While armies can be split endlessly into smaller units, their effectiveness dwindles, and without a hero present cannot benefit from the numerous experience enhancing artifacts that litter the map.

through enemy troops, but their survival is typically essential to a campaign's completion. These heroes are for the player to identify with, and as such one is more likely to restore an auto-save than tolerate their passing. Such restoration is inevitable.

The battle map is also isometric, with up to seven creatures representing the racial makeup of an army. Each unit or



Victory to the Blue Flag



All the vitals dissected



"The giant scorpions are dead! Hurrah!"



The Road from Cirith Ungol?

HIT THE TOWN



Just like in Sid Meier's Civilization, Heroes IV lets you upgrade your cities. Add new and improved structures for better training, tighter defence, and fruitier city view screens.

group of units takes turns to fight, and inflicts or takes damage as a group. The total of individuals present is shown by a number hovering above the creature's head. Each time they take damage, little numbers representing hit points and lives lost flitter upwards to the sound of their pained grunts. When the last little skull soars away, the troop's demise is official, and the symbolic creature falls.

Attacks can be melee, ranged, or spell based. The player can select the mode of attack desired from a menu, or adjust a preset so the cursor behaves the same every time. There are myriad variables affecting every blow, including

the number of units on each side, their equipment, and how their races match up. The logic runs along similar lines to the rock paper scissors formula, only with over sixty different races, things can get somewhat more complex. As the exact makeup of an enemy force can only be determined by attacking it head on, it is imperative to have an army as strong as possible before an attack.

Town and country

Hence the resource management side of Heroes IV. Each map will have several towns and resource generating structures. Facilities like farms, mines and sawmills will contribute tithes of resources to their master every turn, and cities can sell, upgrade and fit out units. They also serve as choke points on the map, and are typically the final objective of any campaign.

The graphics are nice, with every creature able to move, fight and die along eight axes. More impressive is the music, professionally scored, and performed on a scale to match the game. It's enough to suppress the gamer's near automatic urge to turn down the music.

Big wars

Out of the box, the scope of this game is huge. There are six mammoth campaigns included, and 31 single mission scenarios for one to six players. Playing and re-playing these represents hundreds of hours of entertainment, but the true potential lies in the flexibility of the game engine. Heroes IV ships with a fully functional map editor, the same one used by the level designers themselves. While the fan base may not be destined to match the size of the Freedom Force following, purchasers are assured a steady supply of user-created levels to tide themselves over until official add-ons become available.

Heroes IV isn't the best looking game on the market, but turn-based strategy fans know that's not the point. The player doesn't see pixels and sprites, but opportunities, strategies, and power over a virtual world. Heroes of Might & Magic rewards hours of fevered anticipation with victory or defeat, whichever the player deserves. It's a fine example of the craft of turn-based strategy, certain to entertain anyone with patience.

James Cottee

RATING

FOR

- Deep gameplay
- Good level editor
- Long game lifespan

AGAINST

- Plain graphics
- Limited tactics
- Orcs lack amusing dialogue

OVERALL

The best Heroes game yet. Turn-based fans have a new excuse to shun the light.

92

NASCAR 2002

It's the future of turning left!



DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Papyrus

PUBLISHER

Sierra

DISTRIBUTOR

Vivendi

PRICE

\$69.95

RATING

G8+

AVAILABLE

Now



"Left...Left...straight..."



This Race is Over

SYSTEM

NEED

P2-350
64Mb RAM
32Mb Videocard
500Mb HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1500+
128Mb RAM
GeForce3
1Gb HDD



The Rolling Start



Pit crew

RATING

FOR

- Driving Tutorials
- Astonishing realism
- Unsurpassed quality

AGAINST

- Controller needed
- Sim freaks only
- Limited appeal

OVERALL

Easily the best driving simulation available

94

NASCAR Racing 2002 (NR2002)

Season is so good, that one must struggle in order to find an aspect of the game that warrants any criticism. Despite this, it will most definitely not appeal to everyone. Firstly, NR2002 is a realistic simulation of the highest order. As in real life, exhaustive practise is needed in order to master the seven-hundred-and-fifty horsepower machines. Secondly, the abundance of oval tracks may become monotonous to some: there exist only two road-courses, from a total of twenty-seven tracks. Thirdly, some sort of steering peripheral is a necessity if you want to play the game at all competitively. The keyboard is not a recommended apparatus for driving a ridiculously high-powered beast, bumper-to-bumper, door-to-door, at ludicrous speeds - although it does make for some spectacular collisions. Fervent simulation devotees wouldn't have it any other way.

It's a Good Day for a Race

The game looks superb. The cars are rendered fantastically, the tracks all look totally authentic and the background scenery is stunning.

There are multiple graphics options that allow you to tweak the game to suit your system, which is highly recommended; when you have hundreds of feet of pavement flying underneath you in the blink of an eye, frame-rate is of vital importance. NR2002 also boasts a fully featured, 32-bit colour paint-shop, which allows the complete customisation of your car and pit crew.

Petrolhead Paradise

From the thumping rumble of the cars idling in pit lane, to the resonant scream of them hurtling down the straightaways, the guttural sound of these monstrous V8 engines has been faithfully recorded and recreated in the game. In addition, NR2002 encompasses radio chatter from both your crew chief and your spotter. These are invaluable aids for playing the game and are implemented terrifically.

What's changed since previous releases? NR2002 is outwardly similar to its forerunners. There remains the same game modes, "Testing Session", "Single Race" and "Championship Season". The familiar driving aids are still there, from automatic shifting to

traction control - as are the pre-race options for setting AI difficulty, damage level and driving realism. The car setup options (i.e. the garage) are also of the same memorable complexity - although the game is easily playable using the various default car setups. NR2002 supports Internet play as well as multiplayer modem games.

P-plater Heaven

New features in the NASCAR Racing series are the driving lessons. These in-game tutorials cover all the basics of driving - from driving tips to setup guides. Three times NASCAR champion, Darrell Waltrip explains the intricacies of each track, including the fastest line to take, setup tips and strategies. The driving lessons are an excellent example of the type of subtlety that separates NR2002 from its superficially similar predecessor.

NR2002 is an impeccably polished game, obviously of the highest quality in all departments. Despite only appealing to an exclusive, niche market, it prevails entirely and unquestionably as the best driving simulator available.

Victor Webster

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DIABLO

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ON SALE NOW!!!

Ghost Recon

Desert Siege

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Red Storm

PUBLISHER

UBI Soft

DISTRIBUTOR

UBI Soft

PRICE

\$49.95

RATING

M15+

AVAILABLE

Now



A giant armoured smoke grenade



No! I love Star Wars... I was just kidding!

SYSTEM

NEED

PII 500,
128Mb RAM,
Win95/98/XP,
16Mb Video

WANT

PIII 1GHz+,
256Mb RAM,
64Mb Video,
DX8 sound



Some greenery amidst the Desert



"Another happy voter," Robert Mugabe

RATING

FOR

- New multiplayer modes and weapons
- Desert terrain a nice change
- Modding Tools

AGAINST

- No smoke!
- Still too few missions
- New weapons for multiplayer game only

OVERALL

A good expansion for Recon fans and hopefully a conduit for more user missions and campaigns.

75

Ghost Recon gamers are lucky little sods, aren't they? We usually have to wait at least eight months for a decent expansion pack to emerge from the bowels of a developers studio but Desert Siege has arrived in almost half that. Your mission is to once again boldly go where no other troops are stupid enough to even consider thinking about going, to do the impossible, think the unthinkable, achieve the unachievable and get back in time for Jerry Springer.

What shall we play?

Desert Siege offers the discerning Ghost Recon fan eight new missions, some featuring new specialists locked within them, and a host of new weapons for multiplayer action only. There are also four new multiplayer maps as well as the new single player desert maps. The expansion seems mainly aimed at improving the multiplayer side of the game and to that end, there are two new multiplayer game modes. Domination is one of the new game modes and its focus is on controlling

territory. Points are won when a player enters and controls a zone. The zones are visible on the command map and are also numbered for easy reference. This opens the way for some intense tactical action as teams decide to either dig in and dominate one zone, or move out and try to dominate others to increase their points.

The second new game type is called Siege and has one team defending a "base," which is marked out by coloured smoke, while the other team (or teams) try to seize it. A base is considered taken if a team has an active soldier present in the "capture zone" at the center of the enemy's base for 5 seconds.

There are nine new weapons available in the multiplayer game with a few creeping into the single player missions as well. The Russian PKM heavy machine gun, for example, is the favourite of one of the new specialists.

Let's mod...

One of the most promising developments in Desert Siege

however is the inclusion of modding tools for the creative gamers out there who like to make their own missions and campaigns. Plug-ins for 3D Studio, lighting tools and a texture editing tool along with instructions for them and other editors are included in the package. Bohemia Interactive's Operation Flashpoint has benefited enormously from this sort of developer assistance with literally hundreds of missions and many campaigns and total conversions out there courtesy of the fans.

Unfortunately one annoying feature of Ghost Recon hasn't been fixed in this expansion, and that is to do with the use of smoke grenades. In a game where stealth and speed is so important it is unforgivable that your troops don't have any smoke grenades! Amusing too is that Red Storm released a 45Mb patch for Desert Siege as soon as it came out. If you want the very latest version of the game, you have a long overnight download to deal with as well.

George Soropos

Rangers lead the way!



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Available from the following retailers:

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Harvey Norman

Might & Magic IX

More mazes & monsters

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

New World Comp

PUBLISHER

3DO

DISTRIBUTOR

Take 2

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

MA 15+

AVAILABLE

Now



Mystical worlds in three dimensions



"What beautiful ears you have..."

SYSTEM

NEED

P II 400
64 MB RAM
1 GB HDD
16 MB 3D card

WANT

PIII 500
128 MB RAM
1 GB HDD
64 MB GeForce 3



Adventure on the High Seas



An exile from Everquest

RATING

FOR

- Huge adventure
- Nice looking graphics
- Nicer clear sounds

AGAINST

- Resource Hungry
- Finicky combat
- Repetitive

OVERALL

A finely worked example of the RPG. Veterans of the series will get exactly what they expect.

88

One of the most prolific and longest running RPG series for the PC, Might & Magic fills an important market niche. The first person, squad based adventure game is a natural ally of D&D aficionados, and grants countless hours of dungeon crawling bliss. Players complete quests, or bouts of exploring, fighting, plundering, and upgrading that provide a steady stream of positive feedback. Might & Magic games, whilst obviously inspired by the seminal works of Gary Gygax, are a wholly different franchise, and are thus freed from slavish obedience to a rule set that dates from an age when computer games were but the fevered dreams of madmen.

Engine of destruction

Might & Magic IX represents a departure for the series. For one thing, the last three games all used exactly the same graphics code. Number nine breaks out into 3D, thanks to the wonders of the Littech Engine. Now a visual match for Wizardry 8, MMIX packs in Half-Life

style scripted events to advance the story. Other FPS favourites also feature, like quicksave/quickload, jumping puzzles, and crates. While the game is effectively linear, the environments make sufficient use of 3D to encourage and reward exploration and lateral thinking.

More impressive, and ultimately more immersive, is the sound design. Effects range from the squishing of grass underfoot to the scurrying of fiendish creatures just outside the field of vision. There are around 200 large game areas, 20 dungeons, and at least 60 hours of game time, not counting replay, cheating and human error.

The cycle of day and night is striking, with a minute passing every two seconds. Dungeons, and even open spaces become near pitch black, necessitating the use of illumination. The AI is certainly on the ball, with enemy creatures darting about like they have a will to live. This makes combat more intense, and more frenzied. Or, if you prefer, more irritating. Long time fans may be disappointed to learn that parties from previous games cannot

be imported, but then the point of this genre isn't about having things, but earning things. From the very beginning, the mission statement for Might & Magic has been to start "naked with a stick" and work your way up. Plus, this is one of the only games in history to include fully implemented cow tipping.

Choose, and perish

This is the latest in a game series that's been going for almost 20 years. And it could be the last. The core market of solo RPG games has been sapped by the recent explosion in massively multiplayer RPGs, and nobody really knows if games like Might & Magic will survive. Sir-Tech, the makers of the Wizardry series, recently bit the dust. And while New World Computing is now a subsidiary of 3DO, one can understand why that fails to inspire confidence. RPG gaming may be facing a new dark age of nothing but Final Fantasy clones, so this might be as good as it gets. RPG fans are advised to get while the getting is good.

James Cottee



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FIFA 2002 World Cup

60% of homes are now watching South Park

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

EA Sports

PUBLISHER

EA Sports

DISTRIBUTOR

EA

PRICE

\$69.95

RATING

G

AVAILABLE

Now

SYSTEM

NEED

Win95-XP,
PII400,
64Mb RAM,
16Mb Video

WANT

PIII 1GHz, 128Mb
RAM, 64Mb
Video, Dencorub
and 1/2 a dozen
Oranges.

RATING

FOR

- New moves and AI
- Best looking FIFA yet
- Most enjoyable FIFA so far

AGAINST

- Tricky precision control
- No Les Murray
- No ads for sexy Italian movies during half time

OVERALL

A must for PC Soccer fans as it is the best FIFA - a much needed shot in the arm for a fading series.

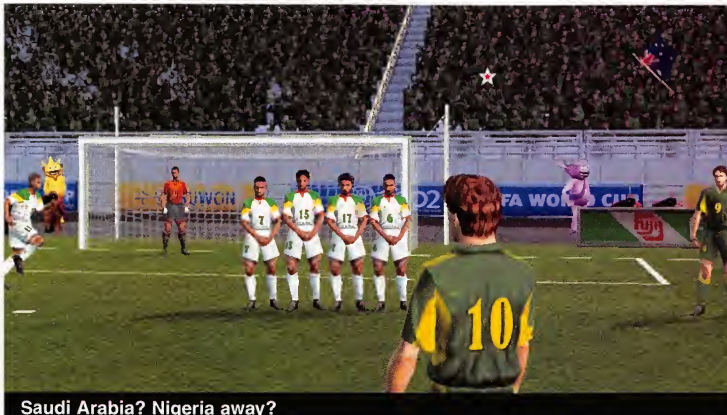
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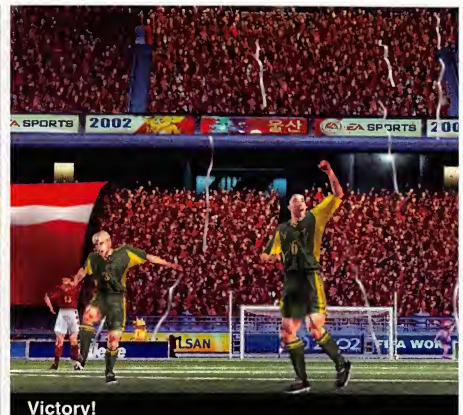
Australia chokes in friendly... again



What is in hell that yellow creature on the right?



Saudi Arabia? Nigeria away?



Victory!

Once every four years SBS manages to beat off the intense late night ratings challenge from every Ab Blaster and 14 speed fat-free Yak grill on the market to bring the World Cup to our living rooms. This year EA hopes you'll also have FIFA 2002 World Cup to play alongside viewing the real thing.

The first thing that grabs you when you start the game is the graphical splendour of the stadiums and the new look player models. The 3D engine in FIFA 2002 has had the biggest revamp in the series' history and boasts an impressive amount of detail, from the lush looking grass to the emotive expressions on players' texture wrapped mugs.

Strong but Sensitive

The heart of this or any other Soccer game is its interface and AI - how the game actually plays out. In this respect EA have done an amazing amount of work on FIFA 2002. Passing is now much more of a precision skill than simply pushing the correct button and pointing vaguely in the intended direction. A

strength meter determines how hard the pass will be struck and the direction is flagged by the player by the exact direction they are pushing their controller. In this way it is possible to do things like send through balls to team mates without an unrealistic 'through ball' button to make it easy.

There are many other refinements which make FIFA 2002 play more like an actual Soccer fixture than any previous game. Your passes can be blocked by players in many different ways, both intentional and unintentional. The shot meter is now more sensitive and so more refined control is needed with it, and forget those easy top corner shots. FIFA 2002 makes you work for them, if you want a brilliant curling shot into the top left corner you'll have to put it there without any help from the AI.

Facing the Challenge

Your new computer opponents have been upgraded with much more effective tactics and skills, offensive AI is smarter and makes better use of passes, support, one-twins, and

through-balls. The AI also looks for weaknesses, open spaces, and slower defenders to get the best of you. FIFA 2002 is more true to life in the way it handles defence as well. Your opponent must be facing you for a tackle to work, most of the time. If you tackle too early you will waste your effort and end up having to sprint to get back near the action. If you try a slide too far in front or behind a player your guy is basically gone and you need to jump to another. Hit the player directly and the ref will be reaching for his trousers.

FIFA 2002 is the best in the series so far and should make fans who were disappointed with the last release quite happy that EA are back in form. See if you can beat those damn Uruguayans this time.

George Soropos



Are your balls as big as your ears?



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RRP \$699



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RRP \$249



AMS 4100 Speaker System

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RRP \$399



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Global Operations

R.I.P. Counter-Strike? Not just yet...

DETAILS
DEVELOPER
Barking Dog
PUBLISHER
EA
DISTRIBUTOR
EA
PRICE
TBC
RATING
MA
AVAILABLE
Now



Terrorists taking it in the face



Check the variety of settings



"Spare him! That jumpsuit is punishment enough..."



Muzzle flare of a terrorist

SYSTEM
NEED
PIII500, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb video, 800Mb HD, Win95/98/XP
WANT
PIII800, 256 Mb RAM, 64Mb video, DX8a sound

As winner of the hottest reality TV show on the planet, Amputation Island, you have been given the opportunity of a lifetime. The Global Operations team is the best of the best of the second or third best, and you're the next to last best of the best of what's left, well done. You will be expected to put up with colourful backhanded remarks about your ancestry and size of wedding tackle, or lack thereof. You will also be expected to die first, preferably in great pain and yelling something about your mother.

The Counter-Strike phenomenon, has been with us for a long time now and has seen off any and all challengers with the cold clean efficiency of a Norwegian Whaling vessel. Tribes, Tribes 2, Quake III Arena, Unreal Tournament and Return to Wolfenstein have all come, gone and been forgotten by the Counter-Strike community who remain fiercely loyal to a game that owes its existence to the creative efforts of gamers rather than developers.

As a direct competitor to Counter-Strike, Global Operations faces an enormous problem overcoming the intense loyalty felt by many players to

their favorite game. Part of this loyalty comes from the fact that Counter-Strike is old, cheap technology that doesn't require every player to go out and buy a new game to join in the fun. Therefore, any new contender is already behind the eight ball and has a lot of convincing to do in order to succeed.

Global Inspirations

So how has Barking Dog gone about doing this convincing? By hoping that a game designed for online tactical play from the ground up will be so much better than one jury rigged by gamers, that everyone will just want to play it. Global Operations borrows heavily from

weapon is suited to each class' specialty; sub machine guns for the Recon guy, grenade launcher for the Demo man, etc. Secondary weapons are shotguns, grenades and pistols and are mostly the same for every class. You can also make use of night and thermal vision aids, a gas mask and a LAW, if you can afford it.

cf. Counter-Strike

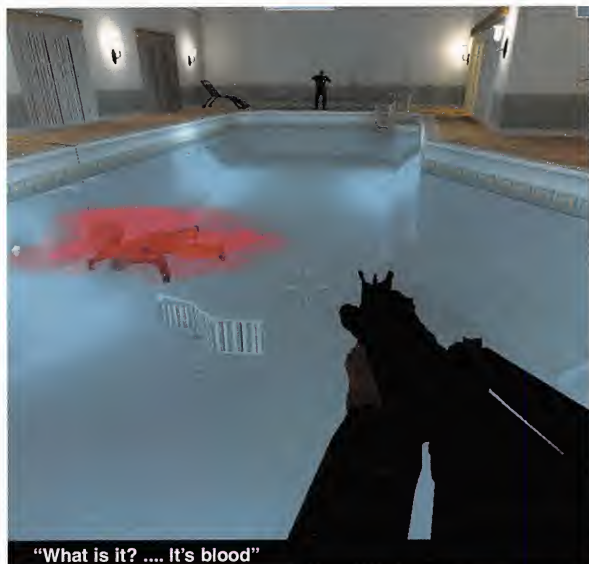
Global Ops gameplay isn't round-based like Counter-Strike, but designed to be more like Return to Castle Wolfenstein. All players spawn in at the start of the game and have a few seconds in which they can equip

Global Ops is an NRA member's porn magazine... including pistols, rifles, shotguns, and grenades

Team Fortress as well as Counter-Strike in having a class-based system with seven different specialists: Demolitions, Heavy Gunner, Commando, Recon, Medic, Sniper and Intelligence Officer.

Each specialist has access to his own unique primary weapon as well as a more general range of secondary weapons and equipment. The primary

themselves, pick their class, weapons and accessories. After that the game begins and players jump into the mission map. You try to accomplish your mission objectives, which may involve blowing something up or rescuing a prisoner, until you are killed or incapacitated. At this point you can call for the medic, if you're



"What is it? It's blood"



A menacing staircase



Medics save one brave soldier



Vehicles are present in Global Ops

THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER



One interesting feature in Global Ops is the Intelligence Officer class available in multiplayer games only. The IO doesn't engage in combat but watches a tactical screen (pictured) instead. He can see what his men see and provides a way for the team to coordinate attacks and defensive moves through one command, just don't let it go to his head.

the trusting type, or return to your transport to re-equip and respawn.

This design avoids the long waiting times sometimes experienced in Counter-Strike if you die early in a mission. However, some might also argue that it lessens the game's realism by giving players an arcade game type

extra life when they die.

Like Counter-Strike each class has different rewards for performing different tasks. If your sniper takes out an enemy threatening a teammate, he'll get a bonus. Medics get bonus money for healing or reviving teammates and dealing efficiently with the clap, genital warts, crabs and any other assorted soldier's ailments. All classes get money for common tasks as well, like rescuing a hostage. This is particularly important to classes like the Heavy Gunner whose weapons cost an arm and a leg to buy.

Wippenry

Global Ops is an NRA member's porn magazine. There are over 30 weapons, including a large variety of pistols, rifles, shotguns, machine guns, sub-machine guns, sniper rifles, and grenades. Each of these has its own unique properties, and a sophisticated ballistics system that takes into account material density, hardness, wall thickness, bullet calibre, player movement, the NASDAQ index, your underpants elastic, armor and per-polygon hit location. Most weapons can also be upgraded with optical sights,

laser sights, and ammo add-ons.

Technology

Global Operations is built around the Littech 2.5 engine - not much more advanced than the Half-Life engine of Counter-Strike. It runs smoothly on a low spec PC in single player mode and quite well online, with a powerful server in control. Server power is an issue with a 1.5GHz/512 MB RAM minimum machine required for decent performance, much more demanding than Counter-Strike. The game's audio performance is better with sharp, crisp effects that are useful to players in helping to locate enemies without being too distracting. The interface is also one of Global Ops strong points, items like gas masks and grenades are easy to access and use.

At the moment, Global Operations is just an expensive and unnecessary upgrade for Counter-Strike players. If and when EA patches the game to improve online performance and some more interesting maps become available, it might become a more essential purchase.

George Soropos

RATING

FOR

- Specialised online gameplay
- Low spec PC OK
- Huge arsenal

AGAINST

- Not much for the single player
- Multiplayer code slow
- Needs patching

OVERALL

Wait to see how many players you have to compete with before committing

79

Grandia II

When Daniel grows up he wants to be a Geohound

DETAILS

DEVELOPER

Game Arts

PUBLISHER

Ubi Soft

DISTRIBUTOR

Ubi Soft

PRICE

\$89.95

RATING

PG

AVAILABLE

Now



"Our Princess is lost - can you save her?"



No Random Battles here

SYSTEM

NEED

PII 350

64Mb RAM

16Mb Videocard

Win 95

WANT

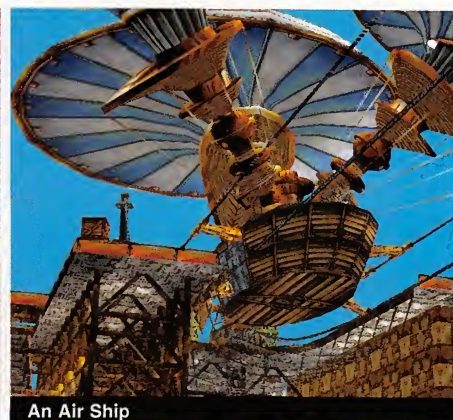
Duron 500

128Mb RAM

32Mb Videocard



Mysterious Woman who sells magic



An Air Ship

RATING

FOR

- Intuitive combat system
- Great characters
- Clever dialogue

AGAINST

- Clichéd plot
- Low res cut-scenes
- Simple environments

OVERALL

It may not be the most well plotted game but it's a fine example of Japanese RPG

70

If Grandia II is anything to go

by, the life of a Geohound (a kind of monster bounty hunter) is something to aspire to. You can be an absolute bastard, treat everyone like dirt, slay beasties, get rich and still become a national hero with maidens of virtue true swooning all over you. The hero of Grandia II, Ryudo is such a person.

As a Geohound, Ryudo is generally disliked and combats this by being one of the most petulant and cranky characters in any game around at the moment. In his own words Ryudo hates women and god, so you just know he's going to fall in love with the former and go to bat for the latter.

Originally developed for the sadly defunct Sega Dreamcast, Grandia II has all the hallmarks of a console RPG - linear plot, fanciful storyline, anime style cut-scenes, save points and poor translation, but once you get over these slight flaws Grandia II proves to be a satisfying, charming and fun little game.

Again with the Good and Evil

The plot, revolving around the "Battle between Good and Evil", is strictly lightweight. An evil god long defeated is on the rise and it's up to our intrepid hero to fight the bad guys, save the day and get the girl. You know the drill. Naturally during the course of his travels Ryudo learns that the world isn't as bad as he thinks, mellows a bit and becomes more heroic than the heroes of legend.

Whilst the plot may sound clichéd, there are many little touches that make Grandia II stand out from the pack. The engaging characters, fun quests and one of the greatest console style RPG combat systems ever created are just some. All of the characters in the game, from our heroes down to people in the street, are well animated and more often than not have something amusing, poignant or pertinent to say.

Although important dialogue is done with voice actors, the vast majority of dialogue is in the form of subtitles, paused at different times to convey emotion and cadence.

Combos and Pretty Colours

Though simple and console oriented the combat system offers a surprising amount of depth and motion. Like Final Fantasy, the combat is real time/turn based with all of the combatants moving around the screen only pausing when one can act. Characters can choose from a number of attacks ranging from combos for maximum damage, criticals that can cancel enemy attacks and reduce their initiative and special magical attacks.

Combat isn't tough but the ability to plan attacks and use tactics elevates it from being a chore to being an absolute pleasure. As far as graphics and music are concerned Grandia II betrays its console heritage with some pretty low-resolution environments and cut-scenes. Overall Grandia II is a bright and refreshing bit of RPG fun. It may be linear but serves as a great introduction to the wonderful world of the Japanese RPG for people who don't own a console.

Daniel Wilks

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Tony Hawk 3



Revert is the glue

With the convenient new Revert move, you can link air combos to manuals. The result is that there are now no restrictions on how long a combo can go for, other than your skill.

Now, as you come down from a Christ Air or a 900, by pressing the revert button (right trigger) and then quickly pulling off a manual, your combos can now go on forever. God bless Neversoft.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, the Neversoft gem that combined furious speed, awesome tricks and a great soundtrack, became the model for extreme sport games everywhere. It holds a warm place in the hearts of PC as well as console gamers, by achieving the until then impossible task of being a competent port. Neversoft only needed to provide a bunch of new levels, a new trick or two and Tony Hawk 3 would have been an acceptable sequel. Thankfully, they've done Tony's name justice and kicked the whole affair forward with some truly satisfying additions.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 (THPS 3) asks the player to complete objectives in levels and competitions to improve their skills and unlock features. By stringing together combos of grinds, grabs, flips and special tricks around the different courses, skaters can chase the ever increasing high scores. There are now more than 3 special trick slots, additional slots can be unlocked as you progress through the game and there's a dizzying number of specials that can be used and they don't need to be bought as in THPS2. A big new addition though is the revert move which strings an aerial trick to a flatland trick - for potentially endless combos.

The most notable improvement over its predecessor, is the animation of the skaters. Subtle body movements react to the board's motion. Rail balancing for example, has the skater jiggling back and forth to stay up. The inevitable stacks are bloody and wonderfully true to life. Watch Tony grab an injured knee or come off running to stay off the asphalt.

For the first time, actual people appear in the levels (we lovingly remember the magic bum from THPS2 of course), alongside the



Tony can't do this in real life



Where's your board, Jamie?

"... Skate parks are larger and more varied than ever before from the snow covered park in Canada to the streets of LA."

cars and other vehicles. They react nicely to harassment by running away or spinning about. The world of Tony Hawk is lively and more hazardous than ever.

Structure in THPS 3 is seen in the career mode where the various courses are progressively unlocked. the career mode is a good training ground. Clocking high scores is still paramount and while goals such as collecting the letters of S.K.A.T.E throughout a level return, some more real world goals are on offer this time. Skaters will have to foil a band of pickpockets, impress onlooking

skaters or deliver some tickets to a friend. Stat points to increase your abilities are now pick ups given at the end of a run for certain achievements. Some goals vary depending on which skaters you're using - a nice touch.

With expanded flatland tricks and rails seemingly everywhere, players can indulge in the street aspects of skating, looking for perfect lines around the parks. The thrill of maintaining a combo of grinds and manuals in the Rio Ruckus competition level (basically a ring of rails and other



Developer: Neversoft ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Distributor: Activision ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: G ■ Available: Now



The Air is Cold up here



Check my factory worker style

Grind vs the World

The almighty grind maintains its power to move Heaven and Earth. One touch of a THPS skater's board is enough to destroy machinery, collapse grandstands and cause an earthquake in Los Angeles! Destructible environments, however ridiculous,

are a nice way to open up new areas and change the skate venue. Other examples of Tony Hawk humour include the fellow pissing in the snow, miscellaneous announcements like the airport lounge chatter and the hilarious Canadian accents (eh?).

grindables) is enough to make you forget about aerials all together. Regardless, bowls and vert ramps feature in all stages. Attempting mammoth combos with all your special tricks and blue transfer gaps is essential - it's too good to refuse.

Globe trotting from a factory floor to a cruise liner, from the snow covered park in Canada to the bustling streets of Los Angeles, pro skaters can skate parks that are larger and more varied in design and style than ever before.

Two-player split screen modes are an absolute scream. Favourites include Graffiti, where you tag parts of the course with tricks and try to steal the other guys' graf territory and Horse, where you must outscore your opponent with one trick. These are perfectly balanced for a

grudge match between mates after a night out. Games that require deathmatch style collisions (for want of a better term), are less successful because arenas are too big for two players generally. System Linking two Xboxes (with 2 TVs obviously) makes for some thrilling four way battles.

Other modes include the easy to use skate park editor, allowing the creation of parks almost as good as the game levels.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 is the definitive trick based extreme sports title. I have visions of a future title where Tony Hawk will get a GTA3 style city to explore and objectives to encounter on the fly. Here's to a freeform future!

John Dewhurst



Nice Air makes for some Nice Tricks

Score

By featuring more realistic skaters and hectic, well-designed parks THPS 3 is the most convincing skate game yet. Injuries, speed and tricks have never been so full on.

92

Max Payne

Developer: Remedy ■ Publisher: Rockstar ■ Distributor: Take Two Interactive ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: MA15+ ■ Available: Now

The New York cop, vigilante and tortured plaything of the gods, known as Max Payne can find no peace as the killing, the deadpan voices and bullet time come to the Xbox. Our nutter Max finds a new home on the console and would be better suited there but for some minor annoying features.

For the minority of readers who don't know what Max Payne is about (for shame!), this is a policeman who loses his beautiful wife, child, colleagues, good name and eventually his sanity, due to some nasty criminals and their nasty drugs. He then tramples through various hovels in New York, gunning down the refuse of society using the slow motion of bullet time. It's time to gun down some junkies...

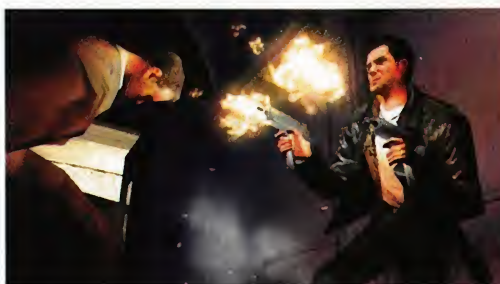
Max Payne works amazingly well on Xbox. The controller setup which some might think to be incompatible with a shooter is perfectly suited to the slower pace of the game. The freedom of a mouse is much less critical in small corridors than in the open arenas of say, Quake. Bullet time means that your most complex movements are given more time to execute, making any precision control problems negligible.

"I was losing control..."

The left analog stick, by default, has the forward, reverse and strafe movements mapped, while the right directs the crosshair or where Max looks. With the left trigger cuing bullet time and the right trigger as fire, there is complete control over Max's actions in a firefight. Jump, reload, health and use item commands are mapped on the four buttons.



Max shoots holes in everyone



Winners Don't Use Drugs

The port to Xbox has meant that entire levels from the PC version have been cut down into manageable chunks - which would be fine if you could return to areas after passing arbitrary load points. This you can't do, so all the ammo and pain killers in previous levels that may have been inadvertently left behind, are lost. With smaller areas to explore, the game never felt so linear.

This is a faithful port which brings us to the fact that the original was WAY too short and lacking in incentive to replay. Also there is no multiplayer AT ALL on Max Payne Xbox. And frequent load screens? You got it. It seems that implementing caching wasn't a priority in this port.

Ultimately it's of interest to

Xbox owners who haven't played the PC version at all and yearn to blow people away. PC veterans should stick to the original format - not least for the modding potential.

John Dewhurst



Score

Max Payne revisited in a faithful port that doesn't flex the muscle that the Xbox has. Excellent control makes the experience comfortable but all too short-lived.

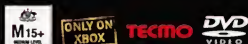
74

FAKE NEVER LOOKED SO REAL.



Fantasy has a new reality in Dead or Alive 3, the next instalment in gaming's most popular "beat'em up" series. Experience multi-tiered fighting environments, a kinetic "tag-battle" feature and some female opponents that'll knock you for dead.

DEAD OR ALIVE 3



xbox.com.au

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Blood Omen 2

Developer: Crystal Dynamics ■ Publisher: Eidos Interactive ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: M15+ ■ Available: Now

The true sequel to *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen* from 1996, is a third person action-adventure of sorts with flash floods of blood. *Blood Omen 2* takes the near-vanquished vampire Kain and sets him on the journey to reclaim his supremacy in the dank city of Meridian.

The game is the darkest yet on the Xbox, not only in the level of actual light but also in subject matter. Kain kills enemies and passers-by alike and drinks their blood to maintain his health. The combat is fairly simplistic, amounting to attack and parry

phases between Kain and various enemies. Kain's Dark Talents mix up the action with semi-invisibility, charming humans and super jumps among them. The puzzles? Lever pulling and find-the-key antics. Oh and it's amazingly linear.

Despite all this, the game is rather compulsive. Dialogue is engagingly devilish and old world charm creates a good background to the bloodthirsty action. *Blood Omen 2* lacks some depth but is still diverting and fun.

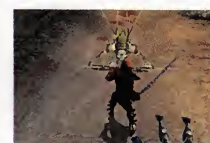
John Dewhurst



The World is a Vampire



"Neck Inspector! ... Come show me your necks!"



Score

Kain returns in a convincing story equipped with equal portions of combat and puzzle solving. Fun but half baked.

76

Wreckless

Developer: Bunkasha Games ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Distributor: Activision ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: G ■ Available: Now

Wreckless is an action driving game that sees Hong Kong law figures racing around in pursuit of various agents of the Yakuza, to smash and destroy their vehicles. In true arcade style, there are time limits and neon on-screen arrow cues to the enemy cars that must be "apprehended".

Wreckless is good eye candy, with a distinctive style and hectic on-screen action. As one of your 14 possible vehicles plows through a crowded market, citizens flee for their lives, foodstuffs are tossed into the

window screen and pyrotechnics flare around you.

Though impressive, the game is a one trick pony. There are a number of different targets to crash into in each level and time limits to meet - and that's it. The turning circle of some cars is disappointing considering how narrow streets can be and how often you end up arse first while your targets speed away. Two words: No multiplayer.

Ultimately games need to present more than running things down/over for lasting appeal.

John Dewhurst



"Anyone seen my left side door?"



Monster Truck eats Scenery



Score

Passable action driving game with a destruction bent that falls down due to a narrow focus.

60

Jet Set Radio Future

Developer: Smilebit ■ Publisher: Sega ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: G ■ Available: Now

The year is 2024 and personal freedoms are going the way of the dodo in Tokyo. Police crackdowns and strange goings-on plague the populace and once again it is up to the Rudies, graffiti kids with anti-gravity roller-blades and an ear set on the pirate underground radio station, Jet Set Radio.

They skate around different areas of Tokyo tagging walls, beating off rival gangs and smashing the system. That's it. For all of the gloss and glamour of the game - fantastic cel-shaded graphics, great tunes by some serious talent - Jet Set

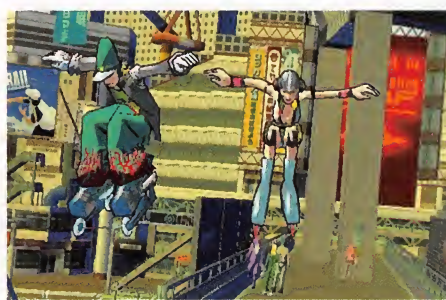
Radio Future leaves you a bit cold. There's not much depth.

The levels involve the player grinding and jumping their way around a suburb tagging things, fighting cops and then performing some kind of trick challenge to either defeat a rival gang or recruit a new player. The levels are huge and well designed but the lack of a timer means that many of the objectives are very hard to get to without a lot of trying and more frustration. Jet Grind Radio the Dreamcast predecessor of the game is sadly far superior.

Daniel Wilks



Crazy Hair means I'm cool



I Believe I Can Fly



Score

Hard without being challenging, Jet Set Radio Future leaves you cold due to the repetitive nature of the action

80

UFC: Tapout

Developer: Dream Factory ■ Publisher: Crave Ent ■ Distributor: UbiSoft ■ Price: \$99.95 ■ Rating: MA 15+ ■ Available: Now

UFC: Tapout won't appeal to everyone, even fans of fighting games. The reason? Simple. Based on the Ultimate Fighting Championship franchise, it is one of the most in-depth and tactical fighting games out there. No special moves, no Street Fighter-esque powers, just a button to control each limb. Fights usually end with one combatant sitting on the other's chest pounding them into submission. Why is that good? UFC: Tapout is about as realistic as a fighting game can get.

Fights are short and brutal, there are no juggles and fighters can't keep up a steady barrage of attacks without getting worn out. The game has four different styles of play ranging from arcade mode to UFC mode and tournament mode.

Players can also create their own characters with a create-a-fighter mode choosing from a number of skills and attributes. Though the market is limited, the rewards are excellent.

Daniel Wilks



"My face! MY FACE! My Beautiful Face!!"



Joey Tekken takes it like a man...

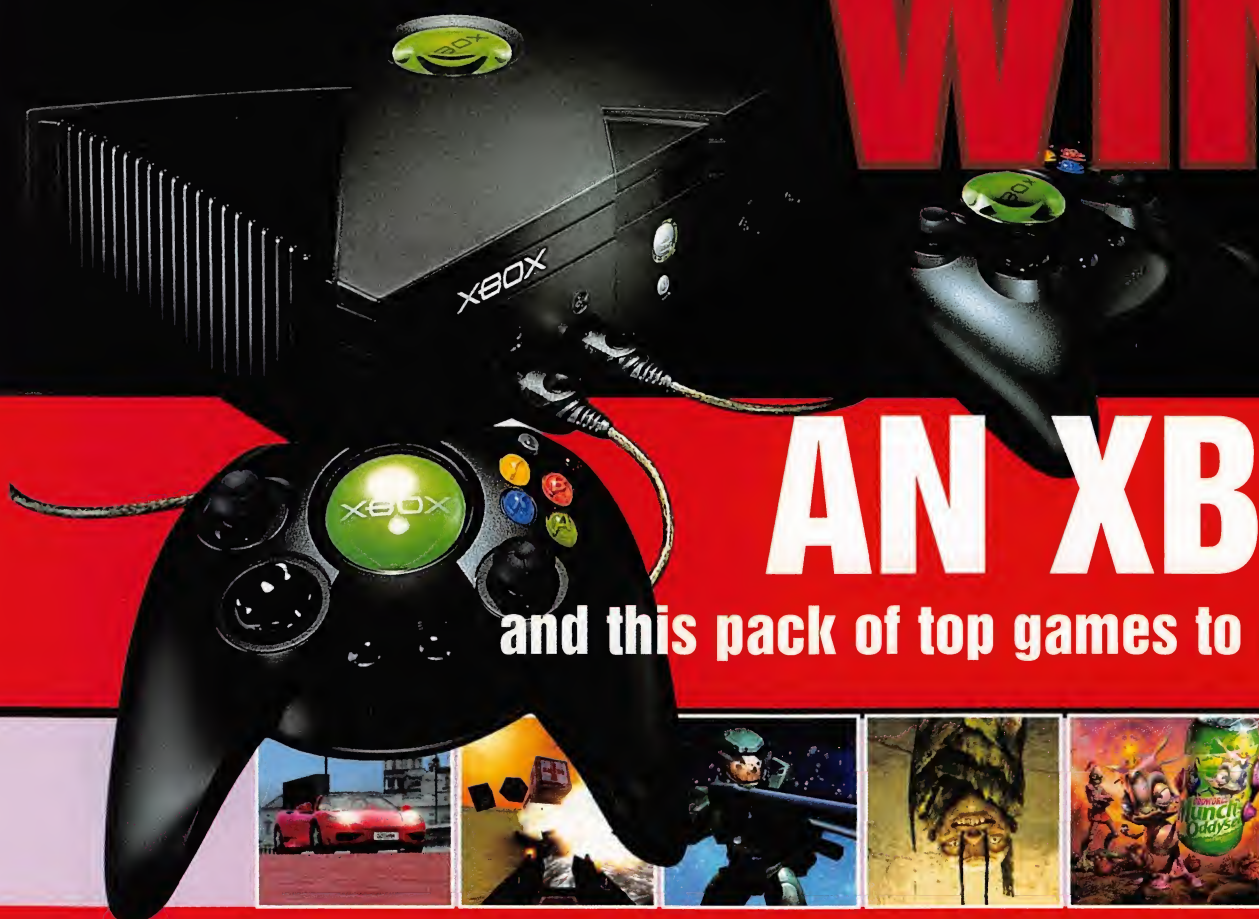


Score

The graphics and sound may be nothing to write home about but the sheer scope of the game and compelling gameplay make it a definite winner.

85

WIN!



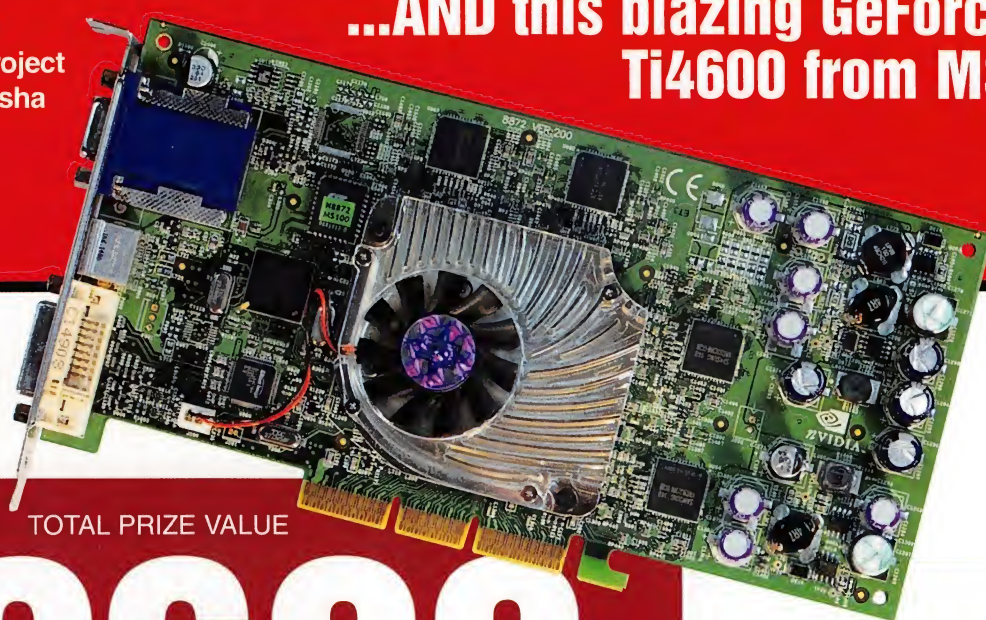
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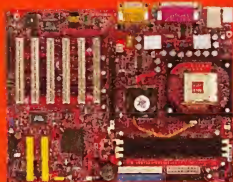
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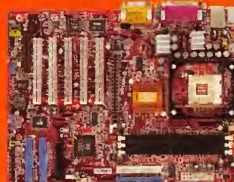


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IN REVIEW

HARDWARE PC&XBOX

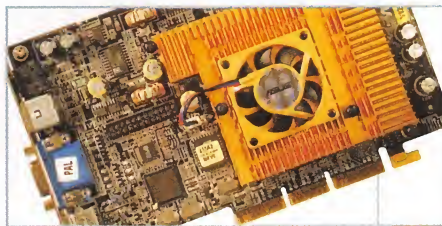
Stuff you need to make your box the Beast

Hello again and welcome back to the wonderful world of Hardware.

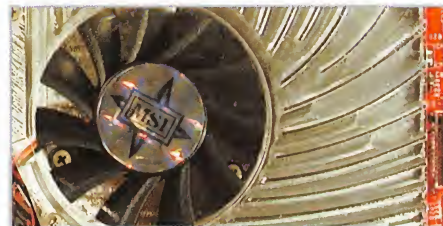
Throughout the months and years I have been into tech one thing has remained a constant - gamers love graphics cards. Actually, they love them a little too much to be healthy IMHO. Anyway, personal prejudices aside this month we have a special treat for you. With the recent releases of the new generation of GPU from nVidia we have gone out of our way to do the powertest to end all powertests and look at a staggering 18 cards ranging from the humble and mostly outdated GeForce2 MX 400 all the way up to the shiny, new, incredibly fast and prohibitively expensive GeForce4 Ti4600. As always the results are contentious and we tell you what to buy and what to avoid.

In other tech news this month we welcome back the tech feature with a four-page spread on CD burning. You may think burning a CD is simple but there you'd be wrong. CD Burning is an art and this month you'll learn from the master, Stuart Calvin. So as not to leave you high and dry the team takes a look at MSI's solution for the new KT333 motherboard chipset, the budget 1.3GHz Duron CPU, an LG combo drive featuring the best bits of CD-RW and DVD-ROM and finally we take the Thrustmaster HOTAS Cougar for a test flight. Of course the Beast and Beastie are still around for you to drool over. Put up your feet and feast on what we have put together for you. See you next month.

James Rolfe
agg@overclockers.com.au



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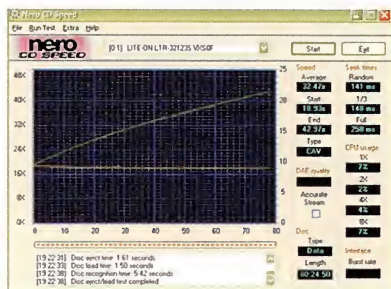
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CRASH AND BURN

Stuart Calvin, whose knowledge of optical drives borders on the frightening, leads us through a series of important lessons when choosing a CDRW. Keep your hands inside the vehicle at all times and hold on... if you can.

Burners are mainstream and no one should be without one. But, burning CDs is bit like sex: lots of people do it but are afraid to ask about doing it properly. In fact it's hard to buy a new rig that doesn't have a burner as standard or available as a cheap upgrade. While the old caveats of transfer rates, interfaces and bus utilisation have improved there are other specifics to consider.

A burner is now a performance piece of kit that relies on critical factors for success. Burners ship with some little-understood connectivity designs as well as some 'undocumented' features. So whether you're a burning phreak or burner learner, read on!



PIO

What the hell is Programmed In/Out Mode?

This is something you'll hear me go on about a lot whenever I review a CDRW or answer somebody's problem in Setup. PIO is a long and technical story but enough needs to be said so that this 'feature' is not disregarded when considering a burner or other optical device such as a CD or DVD-ROM. There are burners available on the market now that use PIO and will not and never

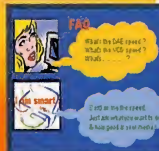
can run in UDMA mode. PIO involves a lot of wasteful overhead because it hogs the CPU whenever a device read or write is needed, which means that PIO and UDMA devices shouldn't be on the one IDE channel. WinXP describes PIO as MultiWord DMA in the Device Manager - so watch out for it! PIO bad. PIO slow your machine, which in turn leads to more buffer underruns and thus more coasters.

UDMAN? Do you mean Ultra Direct Memory Access?

UDMA Modes were developed to overcome the slow data transfers of about 5 MB/s in the IDE/ATAPI interface (the interface used by CDRW devices). To assure the integrity of the faster interface, UDMA also introduced the use of Cyclical Redundancy Checking or CRC on the interface. If errors occur frequently,

the system may determine that there are hardware issues and thus drop down to a slower UDMA mode, or even disable UDMA operation. Support for UDMA is native in Win98 onwards and most of the problems with old drivers are eliminated. Upgrade from Win95 to Win98 while you can!

UDMA



Busmastering! Sounds rude, do I need it?

On new systems there are few issues with running UDMA and there are burners that can take control of the bus and do the work themselves. Unfortunately, certain motherboards don't function well when a UDMA busmaster drive is connected. A BIOS

and chipset upgrade from the motherboard manufacturer is a good idea, if you are able to do this. PIO mode is used as a fall-back when driver or software issues cause problems with UDMA access. And remember, PIO BAD!



UDMA EIDE/ATAPI? What's this?

This interface is a convenient choice for proven connectivity and speed benefits. It is essential that a UDMA burner is enabled and using UDMA mode. If you can successfully set your burner as a slave, ensure that it is actually running in DMA mode. An overlooked requirement for running UDMA66 and faster is the 80 wire

IDE cable. This cable uses the same 40 pins as the old cables, but adds 40 ground lines between the original 40 wires to separate those lines from each other and prevent crosstalk. Some systems and drives will recognise a 40 wire cable and notch the UDMA mode, for all attached devices, back to PIO Mode (Aargh! Not PIO mode! - Ed).

JustLink™

>GO

Is there any advantage in paying for SCSI?

Small Computer System Interface, or scuzzy as it is often affectionately known, is not an interface tied specifically to hard disks. Any type of device can be present on the bus and is frequently the choice of high-end computer users. SCSI is fast and reliable but complex and expensive. SCSI devices require they be daisy-chained in a line, one after another. Like IDE/ATAPI, you cannot 'hot-swap' SCSI devices without risk of

damage occurring. Most PC systems do not provide native support for SCSI the way they do for IDE/ATAPI, which is another reason why SCSI isn't nearly as common as IDE/ATAPI in the real world. This is because implementing SCSI typically involves the purchase of a SCSI burner or CD-ROM of course, but also a special card called a host adaptor complete with unique IDs and terminators.



File Support:

Consider support for: Photo CD, CD-Extra, CD+G, CD-Text, SuperVideoCD and Multi-session CD. All these things are cool.

Should I get a USB burner?

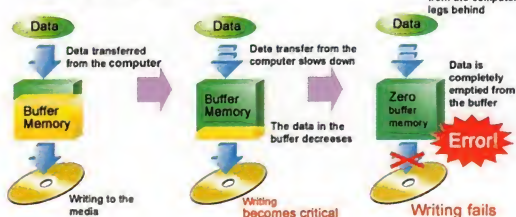
Many people have become quite frustrated with Universal Serial Bus devices that are only supported under one class of host controller or with motherboards which, while having the chip needed for USB, didn't come with any USB ports to connect USB devices. USB 1.1 is native to Windows 98 onward (and some versions of Win95) and uses a standard PCI bus card employing the Open Host Controller Interface (OHCI). With this standard you only get to enjoy 12 Megabits a second, which is about 1.5 megabytes a second of actual data. With burner speeds well established at 24x and higher this transfer rate is

unacceptable and so high speed USB 2.0 products have a design data rate of 480 Mb/s.

If your PC was made during or after 1998, it almost certainly supports USB. NT 3.5 and 4.0 (including SP4) do not support USB but Win2K does provide USB support. USB 2.0 drivers are now available for WinXP through Windows Update, however, support for Win2K is still under development. Microsoft will not provide USB 2.0 support for the Win9x platform or NT. Fortunately, USB 2.0 is expected to be integrated into Intel chipsets by mid-year. USB 1.1 will limit a burner to 4X write, 4X rewrite and 6X read speeds, which is kind of cruddy.



A buffer underrun situation



What about Firewire?

IEEE-1394 (FireWire or iLink depending on whether you bought a Sony product or not) is a fast interface that's about more than digital video. IEEE-1394 enables disks and burners to communicate without using RAM or the CPU. The compact 6-wire cable is less cumbersome than SCSI cables and can supply up to 60W of power, allowing low-consumption devices to operate without a separate power lead. There's no BIOS change either as firewire is hosted on a standard PCI card but to use an add-in controller, your PC must have a four-pin power connector, which attaches to the card. WinXP Pro includes the IEEE-1394 bus class driver with minidriver extensions for add-on and motherboard-based host controllers. Other Windows versions include basic support for IEEE-1394.

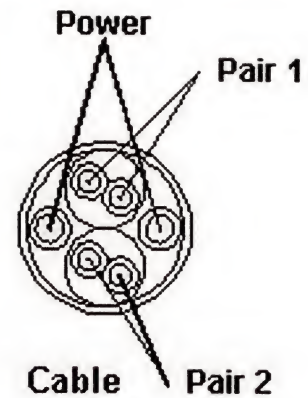
IEEE-1394 and USB are great for shared office and home environments as well as laptops and are as easy as plugging in a telephone. Both USB and IEEE-1394 can hot swap but IEEE-1394 can be extended for longer distances. IEEE-1394 and SCSI can move more data in a given amount of time, but are considerably more expensive than USB and IDE/ATAPI. Applications that are best suited for IEEE-1394 and SCSI are drives and video streams. USB is appropriate for audio, scanners, printers, keyboards, and mice. IEEE-1394 and SCSI are for devices where high performance is a priority and price is not, while USB and IDE/ATAPI are for devices where price is a priority and high performance is not. Look for USB devices that will work with any host controller (both UHCI and OHCI) and for motherboards which come with USB ports.



How fast is fast?

Virtually all drives designed for speeds higher than 12X use Constant Angular Velocity technology. With CAV, data is transferred at a variable rate while the drive spins at a constant rate. The advantage of CAV is that it permits higher transfer rates while maintaining slower rotational speeds. Slower rotational speeds reduce vibration, noise and wear as well as power consumption, all obvious advantages to the notebook or PC user.

Most applications are designed to run on 2X CD-ROM drives but a few require 4X. Therefore, faster drives are not required to run software applications. However, in situations where you need to copy or write large amounts of data, perform frequent software installations, or need frequent random access, a faster drive makes sense. Data is written to a CD starting at the inside and discs are rarely filled to capacity so often the max speed rating is not particularly meaningful. A 32x speed burner has little competitive advantage over a 24x model.



SMART-BURN



What makes Plextor drives so good?

The key to great Digital Audio Extraction is being able to accurately read the audio tracks without losing your place. Plextor does this by adding some extra circuitry to its drives that is used to generate sync signals when

reading audio discs. When a drive can accurately seek to a specific point on the CD over and over again, it makes it very easy for the software to read the audio data and not have to do jitter correction and other fixes.

Why are LITEON drives so popular?

While at times you may be legally entitled to back up your software, it sure ain't easy! Liteon makes 'RAW-

DAO +96' capable burners and DVD readers for when a 1:1 copy is essential.



Zone - CLV



What makes combo drives so enticing?

A combo drive allows for back up to CD-RW and CD-R discs, MP3 compilation and viewing DVD

applications. Combo units are quickly becoming the drive of choice on many desktops where space is a factor.

What Software do I use?

Here's a short list and www.google.com will find them all. Nero and DiscJuggler (pre-mastering); CloneCD, BlindWrite and

CDMate (duplication); Feurio! and ExactAudioCopy (digital audio). Friendly help can be found at <http://club.cdfreaks.com/>



Hit me with a bunch of essential titbits!

EasyWrite enabled CD-RW/DVD-ROM drives will gain features based on the Mount Rainier specification. This spec combines the simplicity of a

floppy disk, large storage capacity of a CD and robustness needed for frequent data interchange and distribution.

Read/Write Modes:

Consider some of 'RAW-DAO +96' drives at listed at www.elby.org.

Media Compatibility: Blank discs are usually available in six formats:

21, 63, 74, 80, 90 and 99 minutes. While discs over 74 minutes are considered oversized an 80 minute disc is now considered the norm but specific burners will overburn to 99 minutes.





Just Speed™

Okay so what about piracy?

Software Copyrights are protected by the same federal copyright law that governs the copying of books, tapes and other intellectual property. In principle, s47C - Back-up copy of computer programs of the COPYRIGHT ACT 1968, allows the purchaser to make one copy - but before you do, take a look at s132(5B) - Offences, then draw your own conclusions. Software copyright and end-user rights are further governed by the End User License

Agreement, or EULA, that comes with the software. Full details here http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca1968133/

For the record, while backing stuff up is fine, the subsequent distribution of that stuff to your mates, the people down the street and anyone prepared to pay you \$10 for a burn of, oh say, Freedom Force, is not only illegal, it's morally repugnant. Shame on you for even thinking it.

EULA what now?

The End User License Agreement (EULA) is a contract whereby nearly all applications are licensed rather than sold. The EULA is a non-transferable personal license and not a sale of software. You don't get the same rights as when you buy say, a fridge.

Most PC software licenses allow the program to run on only one machine and some licenses allow you to run the program on different computers as long as you don't use the copies simultaneously. In all cases, the user is asked to "accept" the terms of the agreement by carrying out an action.

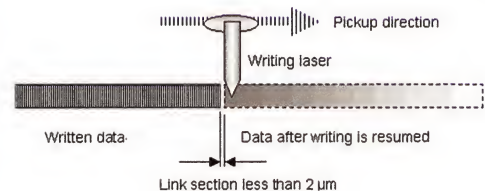
A Shrinkwrap EULA is the most common or "break the seal" type licence. Somewhere, in or on the package, is a EULA in printed form: packaging, diskette or CD-ROM container, a card or a page of the manual. The user "accepts" the terms

of the agreement by opening something, installing or using the software.

Clickwrap EULA: The other popular method displays the EULA on the computer screen the first time a user operates the software. The user presses a certain key, clicking on a "yes" button or by clicking an "I Accept" button.

Warranty Disclaimers: It's also a not infrequent practice to put restrictions and limits on rights in a EULA to the advantage of the publisher that are not legally enforceable in the hopes that the unwary consumer toes the line. So watch out. The Warranty Disclaimer provision is subject to the laws of Australia. Most licenses provide for replacement or personal backup. If in doubt, read the EULA, contact the publisher or get your own legal advice.

LITEON



Coasters:

Don't consider a drive without anti-coaster technology or a buffer smaller than 2 MB.

IEEE-1394 FIREWIRE



Parting Thoughts

While a little knowledge is said to be dangerous, when it comes to burning you can't know too much! If you're armed with just the right software and hardware, burning can be 'set-and-forget'. Deciding between IDE/ATAPI, SCSI, USB and IEEE-1394 is an exercise in trade-off. Knowing what

you then want to do with your burner will let you buy the right features. Just one coaster is one too many and purchasing a burner that won't backup or write your Karaoke and game discs is just as bad. So while the sex mightn't have improved you can do something about burning better discs.



nVIDIA-based VIDEOCARD POWERTEST

by James Rolfe

Anyone observing the video card market over the last year or so could be forgiven for assuming nVIDIA have had a long-standing stranglehold - but that's not really true. In fact, only a couple of years ago there were as many as 5 major players, but one, nVIDIA, has clearly emerged the victor for the moment. In the background with the broken corpse of 3DFX fading away, the survivors are licking their wounds and rallying again. Some strong assaults are already underway, most notably from ATI.

This month's PCPP Lab Test is a testament to two major factors that led to nVIDIA's current domination of the market. Firstly, they concentrated on just making chips - letting other companies produce and market the boards and products to end-users.

Secondly, they have a commitment to produce a new chipset every 6 months and have stuck to this for a good while now, although some people question just how different the various products really are - apart from core and memory clock speeds. However, the net result is that when surveying the video card market, you see a huge number of vendors offering a wide range of nVIDIA-based products. We took a slice out of the market to see what the real-world differences are.

Benchmark Setup

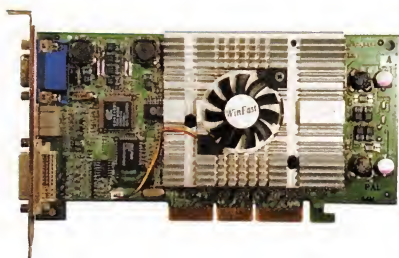
Test bench:

Soltek SL-75DRV5 KT333 motherboard
AMD AthlonXP 1600+ CPU (1.4GHz, 133x10.5)
KingMax DDR400 SDRAM (at 333MHz @ CAS2)
IBM 75GXP 30GB HDD

To test DirectX performance, we used MadOnion.com's 3DMark2001SE. For OpenGL and more "real world" benchmarking, we used the ever-popular Quake3. Win2K SP2, DirectX 8.1 and the latest VIA 4-in-1 and nVIDIA DetonatorXP drivers at time of writing were used, being 438(2)/v(a) and 28.32 respectively. Defaults were used in the benchmarks, except the Q3 High-Quality 1600x1200 test - Geometric Detail was set to High and the Texture Detail slider dragged all the way to the right.

Leadtek WinFast A170 DDR T (GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Plus Corp
URL: www.perplus.com.au
Phone: 1800 007 587
Price: \$275



The GF4 MX is of course the value chip in the GF4 range and the 440 falls squarely in the middle of the MX ranks. Leadtek's implementation as with almost all others follows the reference design closely - apart from a bizarre flat-tube cooler in shiny chrome, including the fan blades. TV-out in composite and S-Video, included WinDVD software, good documentation and the games "Dronez" and "Gunlock" all round out the package nicely. According to our info the Leadtek is a little more expensive than the other MX440s, but does well in the benchmarks - second only to the ASUS within the MX440 group.

Sparkle SP7100M4 (GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Australia IT
URL: www.australiat.com.au
Phone: 03 9882 1811
Price: \$260



The first thing I noticed about this card from Sparkle is the fancy heatsink on the GF4MX chip. I think the stylists rather than the engineers went wild on this one, though, as it has lots of large chunks but not a lot of surface area exposed to the airflow from the fan. Sparkle is obviously aiming for the low-budget end of the market with a trimmed bundle, including only a trial version of PowerDVD and a glossy but very basic manual. However, the card has TV-Out for both composite and S-Video. It does fine in the benchmarks but the ASUS is \$30 cheaper.

Leadtek WinFast Titanium 200T (GeForce3 Ti200 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Plus Corp
URL: www.perplus.com.au
Phone: 1800 007 587
Price: \$426



This Leadtek model sports the previous value chipset from nVIDIA but in presentation and bundle is very similar to their GF4 MX440 card. The cooler is identical apart from being slightly shorter. The GPU cooler as with the GF4MX440's is tall enough that I'd be worried about it hitting devices in the first PCI slot but, realistically, all modern 3D cards require so much airflow that using a card in the first PCI slot is generally a no-no anyway. It's the most expensive Ti200 here by a tiny margin, but fares well in the benchmarking and includes DVD software, TV-out and a couple of games.

MSI 8863 G4MX460VT (GeForce4 MX460 64MB DDR)

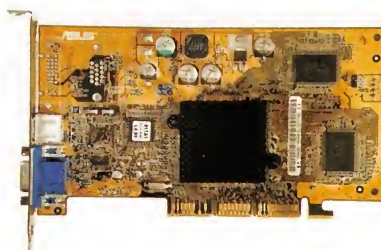
Distributor: MSI
URL: www.msicomputer.com.au
Phone: 9748 0070
Price: \$299



This is a preproduction sample from MSI so I can't comment on the bundle. The GF4 MX460 is the high-end value chip, if you can handle that concept, and this is the only card in this roundup using it. An extra feature of this particular card is an S-Video IN port, so presumably you can capture video with it, as well as the now-standard composite/S-Video TV-out port. Performance-wise the card is impressive, about halfway between a GF4 MX440 and a GF3 Ti200 while staying nearer the MX440's price range.

ASUS V8170 DDR (GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR)

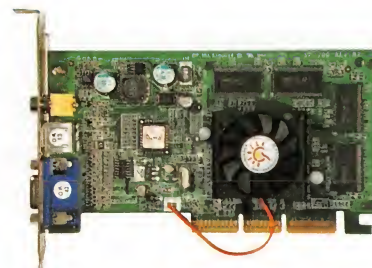
Distributor: Achieva
URL: www.achieva.com.au
Phone: 9742 3288
Price: \$231



No fan on the GPU heatsink on this card, but it has the standard mounting holes so you could replace the cooler with a Blue Orb or similar if you liked. ASUS likes to stuff its boxes and this is no exception, with ASUSDVD software, a decent quickstart manual and a 3CD set of 7 games, at least some of which appear to be full versions although none are really recent releases. TV-out is provided on S-Video with a composite adapter cable. Despite being the cheapest MX440 here, the ASUS was also the quickest by a tiny margin.

Sparkle SP7100M2 (GeForce4 MX420 64MB SDR)

Distributor: Australia IT
URL: www.australiat.com.au
Phone: 03 9882 1811
Price: \$195



At the bottom of the GF4 range, the MX420 is the only one to use SDR memory. This gives it a lowly 2.7GB/sec of theoretical memory bandwidth compared to 6.4 for the MX440 and the Ti4600's whopping 10.4GB. nVIDIA has indicated it will be moving the MX420 to DDR memory soon because SDR continues to rise in price due to the production shift to DDR, which should give this class of card a small performance boost. This card from Sparkle is fairly unexciting in all other aspects, but for \$195 it's hard to ignore, barely more than a GF2 MX400 but with better image quality, newer features and as our graphs show, higher performance.

Sparkle SP7200T6 (GeForce4 Ti4600 128MB DDR)

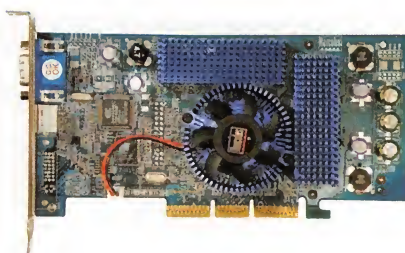
Distributor: Australia IT
URL: www.australiat.com.au
Phone: 03 9882 1811
Price: \$925



Sparkle is a name I've only become aware of recently, but given the range on display in this roundup we'll hopefully be seeing more of them soon. This card uses nVIDIA's current high-end Graphics Processor coupled with the 128MB of the same BGA-mounted Samsung DDR memory as on the ASUS Ti4600 card. Again following Sparkle's apparent stripped-back philosophy with no software bundle to speak of (except the ubiquitous PowerDVD), according to our pricing this card is \$22 cheaper than the ASUS with identical performance. Of course, \$22 is small change when you're slapping over \$900 onto your credit card.

Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanm 200 (G3 Ti200 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Hercules
URL: <http://au.hercules.com>
Phone: 8308 1818
Price: \$420



Featuring the value high-end (above the GF2MX400, below the GF3Ti500) chip from the previous generation, this card from Hercules also sports their famous blue PCB, blue RAM heatsinks and Thermaltake Blue Orb GPU cooler. Although the difference is tiny, it must be noted that this card did start to lag a smidge behind the other Ti200's at higher resolutions. With all that cooling it's not surprising that reports on the net have this card overclocking well, so that margin will vanish pretty quickly in the right hands. Excellent documentation, TV-out for S-Video with composite adapter and a copy of PowerDVD round out the package well.

X-Micro Hulk 5 400 (GeForce2 MX400 64MB)

Distributor: Altech
URL: www.altech.com.au
Phone: 1800 244 416
Price: \$170



The GF2s are the oldest cards in this roundup and in this company they are showing their age. X-Micro is another company we haven't seen too much of in Australia and they seem to be following the familiar budget formula of minimal bundle and straight reference-design cards. Lacking even DVD software and with a fairly basic instruction booklet, the Hulk 5 400 does have TV-Out for S-VGA and composite. They're getting harder to find these days and unless you find one super-cheap, I'd be looking more at the GF4 MX440s now. This is the cheapest card in this roundup but it's also the second slowest in the benchmarks.

Palit Daytona GF3 Ti200 (GeForce3 Ti200 128MB)

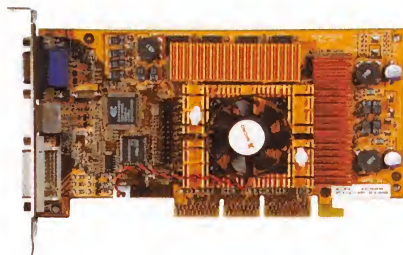
Distributor: Sato Technology
URL: www.satotech.com.au
Phone: 03 9899 6333
Price: \$388



Another of the lesser-seen brands in Australia, the Palit Daytona sports 128MB of DDR memory. This is somewhat unusual for a GeForce3 Ti200 and may be partly responsible for the very slightly higher benchmarks at higher resolution than the other cards based on that chip, as they have the more normal 64MB. This is also the cheapest of the Ti200s here, nearly \$40 or about 10% cheaper than the Leadtek. One way this is achieved is via the almost nonexistent bundle, with no manual at all - quickstart instructions are printed on the driver CD itself - and support only for S-Video TV-out (no composite) and no included software apart from the drivers.

X-Micro Impact 5 T500 (GeForce3 Ti500 64MB)

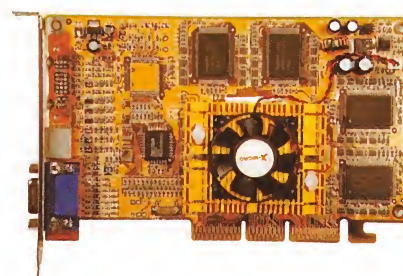
Distributor: Altech
URL: www.altech.com.au
Phone: 1800 244 416
Price: \$690



The Ti500 is the old king of 3D accelerators and still outclasses all but the GF4 Titans as seen in our benchmarks. This card from X-Micro looks a little sloppy, with the GPU cooler forcing the RAM heatsinks slightly to one side. This doesn't affect the stock performance though, with nearly identical results to the ASUS Ti500. It's also not lacking in features, with TV-out for S-Video and composite, DVI-out for flat-panel displays and a copy of WinDVD and, unusually, VideoStudio SE. This is still a very capable card and with the GF4s drawing the spotlight at the moment, you may be able to pick one up at a bargain price.

X-Micro Impact 440 (GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR)

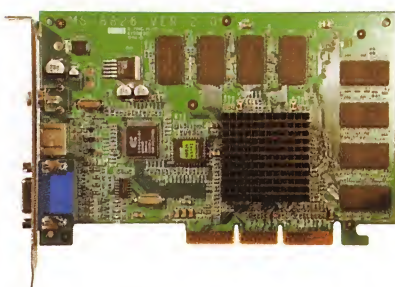
Distributor: Altech
URL: www.altech.com.au
Phone: 1800 244 416
Price: \$242



This card has the same heatsink and fan on the Graphics Processor as their GF2 MX400 card, but no RAM heatsinks. A decent manual, 3 CDs including a game I've never heard of and DVD software pad out the bundle, along with cables for S-Video and composite TV-Out. The second-cheapest of the GF4 MX440s here, it does lag a little behind in the benchmarks.

MSI 8826 MX400 Pro-TC64S (GeForce2 MX400 64MB DDR)

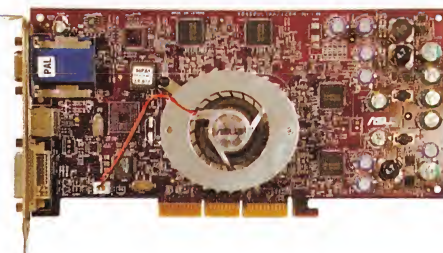
Distributor: MSI
URL: www.msicomputer.com.au
Phone: 9748 0070
Price: \$189



Another fanless GF2 MX400, this plain-looking green card from MSI sports both S-Video and composite TV-Out. Included in the package is MSI-DVD software, their in-windows overclocking tools and an excellent manual. Again, it's difficult to recommend GF2s over their more recent counterparts in the form of GF4MXs. The GF4's video quality is noticeably sharper than the GF2, an aspect of the older chipset that was much complained about even in its day. It's undeniably cheap, but realistically it needs to be, as it languishes at the bottom of our performance graph.

ASUS V8460 Ultra (GeForce4 Ti4600 128MB DDR)

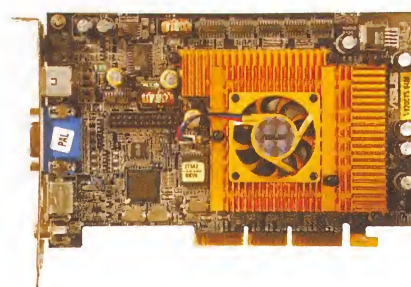
Distributor: Altech
URL: www.altech.com.au
Phone: 1800 244 416
Price: \$947



The most expensive card in this roundup, but unsurprisingly finds itself at the top of the performance graphs, albeit virtually tied with the Sparkle card based on the same chip. ASUS is a much better-known brand, though, and there are many in the marketplace who will buy this card simply for the ASUS name. There's no real reason not to if your pocket will stretch to it, for the ASUS boasts all the Ti4600 features you'd expect including S-Video and composite TV-Out, flat panel support and the best-looking cooler of the lot. A worthy recipient of our PCPP Power Award.

ASUS V8200 T5 Deluxe (GeForce3 Ti500 64MB DDR)

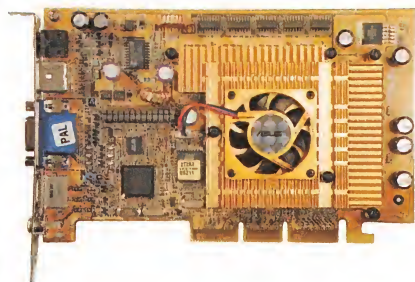
Distributor: Achieva
URL: www.achieva.com.au
Phone: 9742 3288
Price: \$750



This "Deluxe" card and its Ti200 sibling are unusual in this roundup. Indeed, with video-capture, tv-capture, the ability to turn your PC into a digital VCR or even a digital video-based security system, the fact this card has a very decently-quick GF3 Ti500 core seems almost an afterthought. There's even a pair of LCD 3D VR glasses, for adding that extra touch of immersion to games. TV-out of course, with S-Video and composite connectors, probably the best manual of the roundup and no less than 7 CDs including games and a few video-editing programs make this card and its Ti200 equivalent the most feature-packed of the lot.

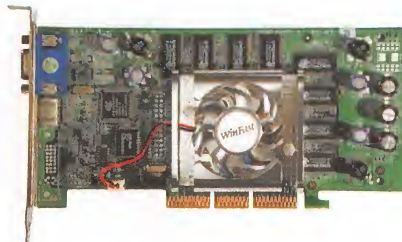
ASUS V8200 T2 Deluxe (GeForce3 Ti200 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Achieva
URL: www.achieva.com.au
Phone: 9742 3288
Price: \$410



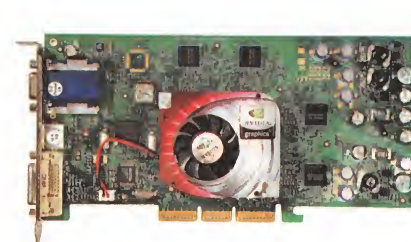
Leadtek WinFast GeForce3 TDH ("Classic" GeForce3 64MB DDR)

Distributor: Plus Corp
URL: www.perplus.com.au
Phone: 1800 007 587
Price: \$345



Sparkle SP7200T4 (GeForce4 Ti4400 128MB DDR)

Distributor: Australia IT
URL: www.australiat.com.au
Phone: 03 9882 1811
Price: \$635



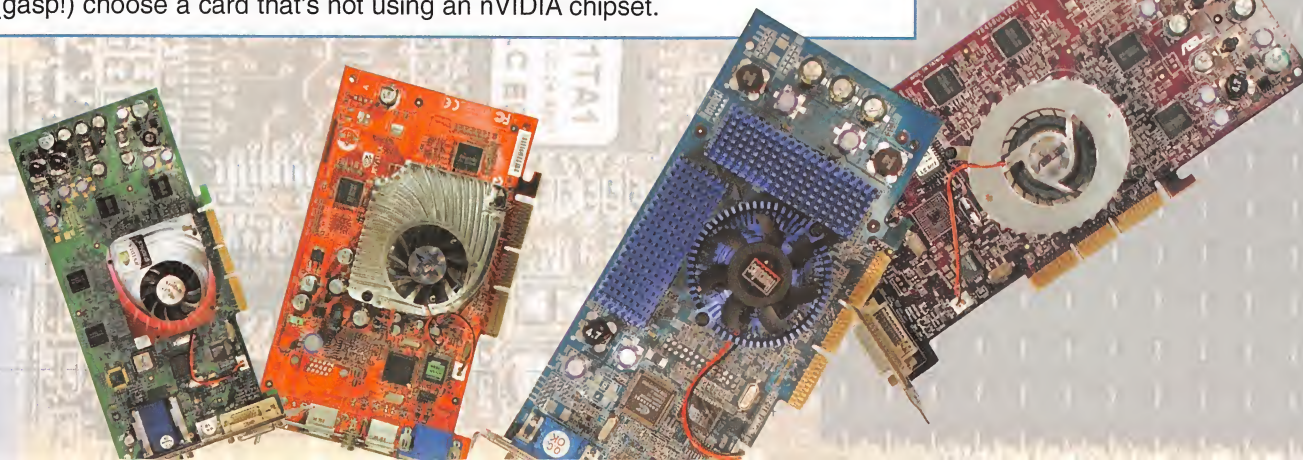
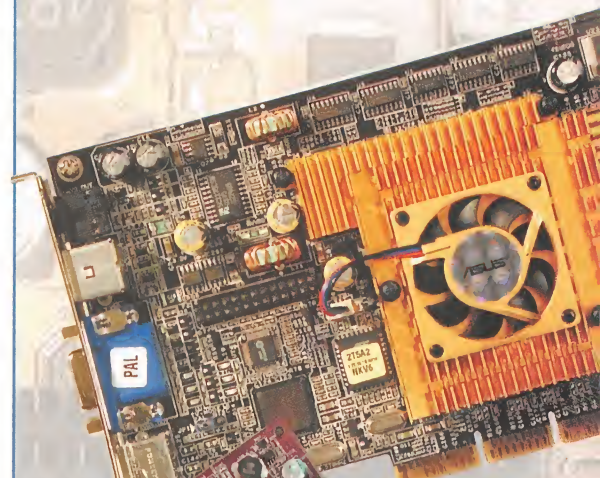
With the same bundle as the Ti500 version, this bargain-priced Ti200 card is hard to overlook. Even if you don't need the video capturing/editing features or the VR glasses, according to the pricing we've received this card is only priced in the middle of the Ti200 range - when compared to cards with only TV-out, not the huge number of connectors this card has. It was tempting to give this card the Value Award, but only a small number of people will have a use for the extra features. Those who do should take a good look at this card.

This card muscled its way to very near the top of the graphs, despite being based on a chip two generations old - the "classic" GF3, now superseded by the GF3 Ti and GF4 Ti ranges. While it lacks some of the more technical in-core features of the newer chips, it'll be a while before that starts to seriously impact your gaming. This card from Leadtek includes TV-out on S-video with a composite adapter, DVI port for flat-panel screens, an excellent manual and a couple of games. I've awarded it the Value Award despite it being an old warhorse, because as the graphs show, it's a bargain indeed.

This for me was the real surprise of the lot, with the small speed difference between the Ti4600s and this, the only Ti4400 in the roundup. There's no way I could give the Value Award to a card costing over \$600, but when you consider the price jump and the performance increase to the Ti4600s, I know where I'd be spending my money. The card itself looks identical to Sparkle's Ti4600 and the included bundle is the same too.

As mentioned earlier, there's very little to note between the cards in terms of physical layout and features. nVIDIA makes it easy for even the smallest manufacturer to produce boards based on their products. With each chipset, nVIDIA also release a "reference board", which is their recommended implementation of that chipset - and many vendors, in fact almost all it seems, simply copy that reference design and ship it to market. It would have been nice to have access to some cards from the other large manufacturers like Abit and Gigabyte, but in this roundup ASUS seem to be the only manufacturer making significant changes to the reference design - the others simply play with different coloured PCBs and fancy cooler designs.

Because of this, any two cards based on the same chipset have very little difference between them in terms of performance. In fact, at the very high end, there's not that much difference between chipsets, as far as our tests could show. At the end of the day most people will pick a point along the price/performance curve that they're happy with, choose a manufacturer they have confidence in and will no doubt be happy with their purchase. Hopefully the info in this roundup will help you with that decision - unless of course you (gasp!) choose a card that's not using an nVIDIA chipset.



MSI

KT3 Ultra-ARU

Inside MSI's shiny red box we find their familiar shiny red PCB once again, a new motherboard based on VIA's KT333 chipset. Despite the much-delayed status of the official JEDEC DDR333 standard, both memory and motherboard chipset manufacturers are eagerly pumping out products. VIA's KT333 is substantially similar to their previous KT266A chipset we featured in the previous issue, but adds support for 333MHz DDR memory, hence the name.

The front-side bus of the CPU still runs at 266MHz and apart from the ATA133-supporting southbridge (which many KT266A boards were already using) there's little new in KT333. Not that that's a bad thing - KT266A is a proven, very fast and stable chipset.

This board from MSI has a number of extra features, including an onboard USB2.0 controller with a backplate containing 4 ports. The Promise PDC20276 ATA133 RAID controller is onboard too, with 2 extra IDE headers provided. Six-channel audio is present and another backplate connector containing SPDIF digital, optical out, centre/subwoofer speaker and rear speaker connections is provided. A third backplate connector has an additional 2 USB1 ports and MSI's "D-LED" diagnostic system of 4 LED's as found on a few of their other boards.

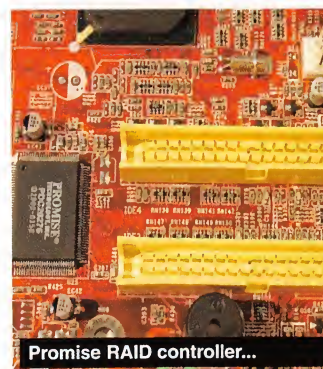
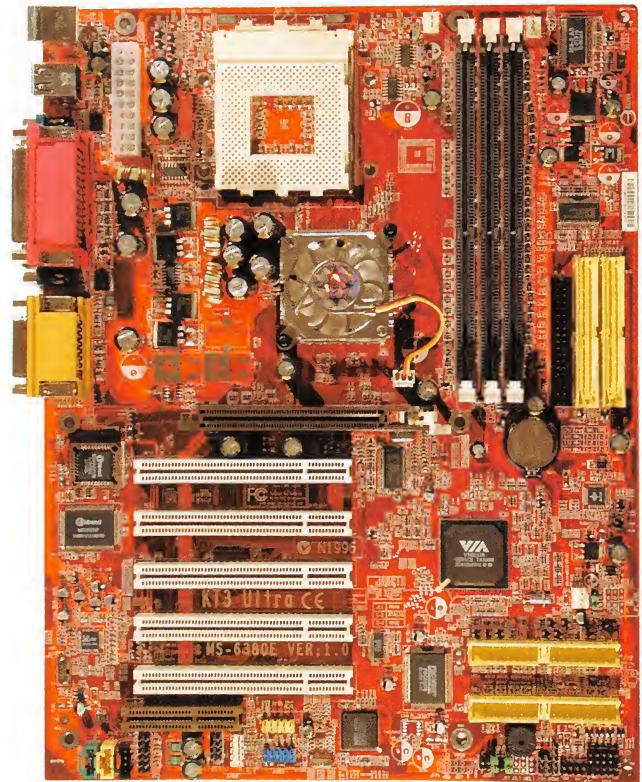
I would have liked to compare this motherboard to a KT266A board, to see the differences between the chipsets. However our Gigabyte KT266A testbed decided this was a good day to die, so that wasn't possible. I do have a Gigabyte AMD760 board though, which offers comparable performance to KT266A without some of the newer features. I also compared MSI's KT333

board to the Soltek SL-75DRV5, their KT333 offering. The results between the two KT333 boards were a little up and down in places, but overall I'd say they are almost identical. They both managed only a small margin above the AMD760 motherboard - it seems KT333's small memory-bandwidth increase doesn't have a huge effect overall, with the AthlonXP still stuck at 266MHz FSB.

However, this motherboard exhibited some flaky BIOS behaviour, even when flashed with the latest BIOS. Firstly it would refuse to finish POSTing with the RAM at 266MHz - this occurred with both the Corsair XMS2700 and KingMax's DDR400. At 333MHz the board was fine, but even changing between 333 and 266 was problematic with the board refusing to restart after exiting the BIOS. The lack of a 1/5 FSB/PCI divisor is a problem for overclockers too, as it means 166MHz FSB, despite being written in the silkscreening on the board, is going to lead to device-confusingly high PCI speeds. However due to the POSTing issue with 266MHz memory I eventually had to abandon overclocking testing, so have no max FSB to report. Swapping RAM, video card, PSU and CPU did not resolve this problem.

Feature-wise this is a very promising motherboard and KT333 seems a sensible upgrade for those with an SDR-based system at the moment. The performance jump alone doesn't justify moving from a KT266A or similar system to KT333 and this particular board from MSI needs a few serious wrinkles ironed out of the BIOS before we can really recommend it. With more KT333 motherboards coming out all the time, MSI needs to address this quickly.

James Rolfe



Price: \$330

Distributor: MSI

URL: www.msicomputer.com.au

Phone: 9748 0070

Upgrade from SDR, but users already running KT266A boards should probably sit tight for a while.

SCORE

79

LG

GCC-4120B CDRW/DVD Combo Drive

LG has produced a raft of great devices over the last 18 months. The 16x to 40x speed writers are known among the burning fraternity but their latest drive is a combination writer/DVD reader with a wide range of great features. Combination drives are enticing for several reasons: they only take up one drive bay in a computer where space is a major factor and they are generally not twice the price. Well-known brand names Ricoh and Toshiba have produced combo drives for some time but newcomer LG has some unusual and refreshing tricks up its sleeve.

Chipset producer Oak Technology has developed the fully integrated OTI-9897 controller and it has found a home in this new LG combo. A fully integrated chipset means cheaper and more reliable production through a single manufacturing source. This engineering feat results in less expensive combo devices and fewer design compromises.

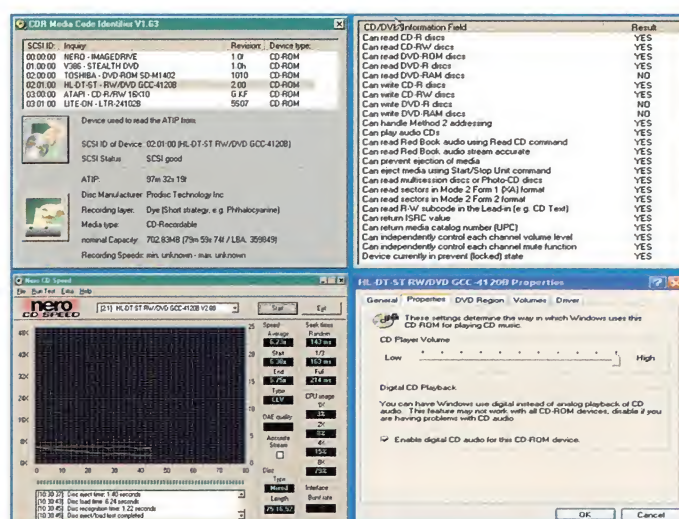
The LG GCC-4120B offers 12x writing and 8x rewriting speeds,

32x CD speed and 8x DVD read speed. While the rotation speeds are comparatively low compared to the current crop of high speed CD-RWs and DVD/CD-ROMs, the comparison is unimportant for a combo device. A seriously wide range of CD formats are supported with CD-Text, multi-session Photo-CD and CD-I capabilities as added bonuses. The LG GCC-4120B will also read DVD-RW and DVD-R formats as well as single/dual layer DVD movie and data discs. The usual 2 MB memory buffer is supported by Oak's ExacLink buffer underrun protection.

LG has bundled CyberLink's excellent MPEG-2 PowerDVD Version 3 software (but sadly, not the improved Version 4). Also included is the latest WinXP compatible 5.1 version of Roxio's Easy CD Creator software for premastering, and DirectCD for packet writing to rewritable discs. Easy CD Creator is a great beginner's application but it won't meet the needs of the advanced user. I was very pleased, too, to find a simple but useful Owner's Manual for the software.

The drive is perfectly behaved as a master or slave off the motherboard IDE channels and was similarly happy running off an ATA100 PCI IDE/ATAPI add-in card. My only complaint is that the drive is a Multiword DMA 2 capable device at best and a Programmed In/Out Mode (PIO) slouch at worst, sometimes displaying all the pedestrian performance of a typical CPU-hogging peripheral. All the advantages of Ultra DMA are sadly lacking but again speed is not the issue with this device.

Ripping audio was hit and miss, with Feurio! refusing to read the disc and ExactAudioCopy reporting trouble with tracking and jitter. Nero Burning ROM was used to



A few nifty results

And a few more

Test Results

- 'Slowish' Digital Audio Extraction (11-12x) and inaccurate streaming
- High CPU usage (79% at 8x CD and 48% for DVD) as expected with PIO Mode
- Slowish Seek Times 143-214 ms (Random to Full Stroke)
- Max Interface Burst Rate on CD-Read 1.0 MB/s
- Outstanding Read-CD error handling but can't perform absolute correct EFM encoding of regular bit patterns
- 703Mb random compilation (79 min 55 secs) disc write in 13 min 31 secs
- Very good CD-RW erase times; reliable, accurate writer for data backup

rip and convert the .cda files to .wav format from a disc, with no noticeable problems. DVD playback was acceptable but it requires about 50-60% of the CPU's time to do it.

The LG GCC-4120B is a feature-rich drive with just enough performance to appeal to a wide range of potential users. This very quiet, smoothly designed unit has the potential to end up in the second and last drive bay of many Australian PCs.

Stuart Calvin

Extra Tech Stuff

- Region Protection Code-2 (4 changes)
- Very wide range of CD formats supported
- Full range of writing modes including RAW-SAO and RAW-DAQ 96
- Compatible with CloneCD, DiscJuggler, Nero, CD-Mate and BlindWrite (including Overburn and Buffer Underrun Technology)
- Unloved by Digital Audio Extraction programs such as Feurio!

Price: \$349

Distributor: LG

URL: www.lge.com.au

Phone: 1800 643 156

While performance is not spectacular, the number of features on this combo drive makes it a sensible choice for the normal user.

SCORE

80

AMD

Duron 1.3GHz CPU

Since its introduction, the Duron has continued to raise the bar in the value processor market. Its relatively high performance and low price has given it the leading edge over its competitors, most notably the Intel Celeron. Intel and AMD announced their 1.3GHz value processors at virtually the same time. Now with both the Celeron and Duron neck-and-neck as far as clock speed is concerned, the lead in the budget CPU race is no longer so easily defined.

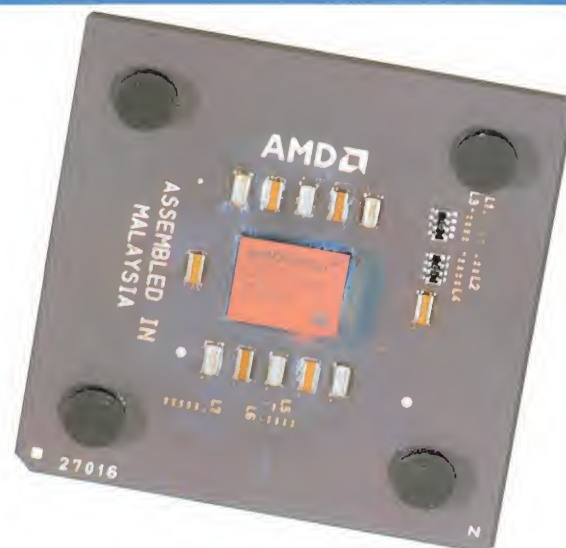
The 1.3GHz Duron, besides packing an extra 100MHz in the core-clock, does not differ in any way from its 1.2GHz predecessor. It is still based on the relatively new Morgan core, which utilizes 0.18-micron technology and features 128KB of L1 cache and 64KB of L2 cache. The Morgan core is, in fact, very similar to the Palomino core that the AthlonXP is based on, however, it has only half the

cache. Reducing the cache, although leading to decreased performance, enables the Duron to be priced much more competitively than its high-end counterpart. Which makes it a budget processor.

Let's move on to the benchmarks, shall we? We have compared the Duron 1.3GHz to a Celeron 1.3GHz (Tualatin core) on identical systems, with the only exception being the motherboard used in each (since the two CPUs use different pin arrangements). The benchmarking programs used were SiSoft Sandra 2002, 3DMark2001 and Quake 3 Arena. This is a pretty good mix of synthetic and real-world benchmarks that will hopefully give you a good idea of the overall performance you can expect to obtain from both processors.

As you can see from the graphs, our Quake 3 Arena benchmark results had the Duron slightly ahead of the Celeron, with only a 6.5FPS difference between the two. This isn't much at all and you certainly won't notice any real performance difference. The 3DMark2001 benchmark had a similar outcome, with the Duron slightly outperforming the Celeron by a matter of a few hundred 3DMarks. However, in SiSoft Sandra's CPU benchmark, the results were even closer. The Duron and Celeron performed more or less identically, with less than 10 points separating the two in both the ALU and FPU tests. This is well within the margin of error and I was quite surprised at how close each performed. As you can see, the Duron certainly does not have the lead it used to over the Celeron.

The Duron 1.3GHz performed quite admirably for a value processor and I have no trouble recommending it to anyone



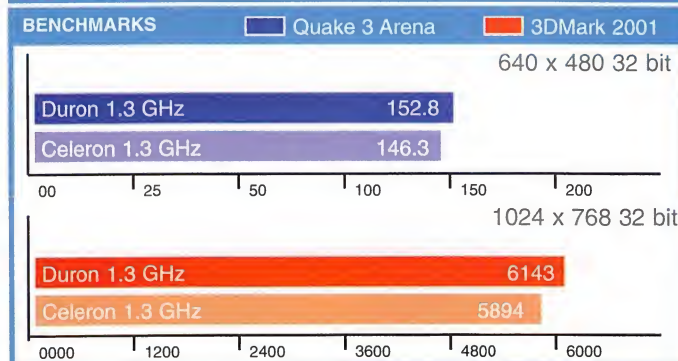
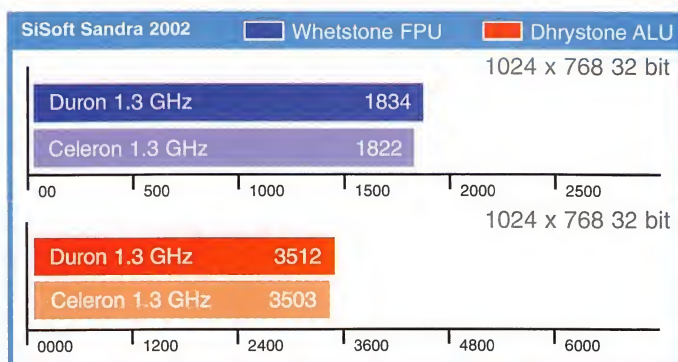
looking at upgrading their setup in the near future. However, unlike in the early days when the Celeron was crippled by a 66MHz bus and low cache, it now boasts a speedy 100MHz bus and a decent amount of cache due to Intel upgrading it to

the Tualatin core. With the Duron 1.3GHz now only \$10 cheaper than the Celeron, the decision on whether to head down the AMD or Intel value processor road is going to be a very hard one to make.

Asher Moses

The Road Ahead

No I'm not going to be discussing Bill Gates' 1996 novel (Damn - Ed). I will, however, be taking a quick look at what's to come in the near future from AMD, according to their 2002 processor roadmap. It looks as though AMD have quite a bit planned for the Duron this year, with the second quarter bringing the introduction of their new Duron core, named Appaloosa (Ah! Horses! - Ed). This is a 0.13-micron part that will bump the front side bus up to 133MHz, but will still feature 192KB cache like the current Morgan core. The shrink to 0.13-micron allows the processor to run significantly cooler than the Morgan and reach much higher clock speeds. The new Duron will also feature the infamous PR rating that AMD introduced with the AthlonXP, and it is rumoured to launch at 1800+ (1.53GHz). Who knows what speeds it will reach before requiring another die shrink? So far though, it's shaping up to be a very interesting year and we will definitely keep you up to date on the latest happenings.



Price: \$185

Distributor: AMD

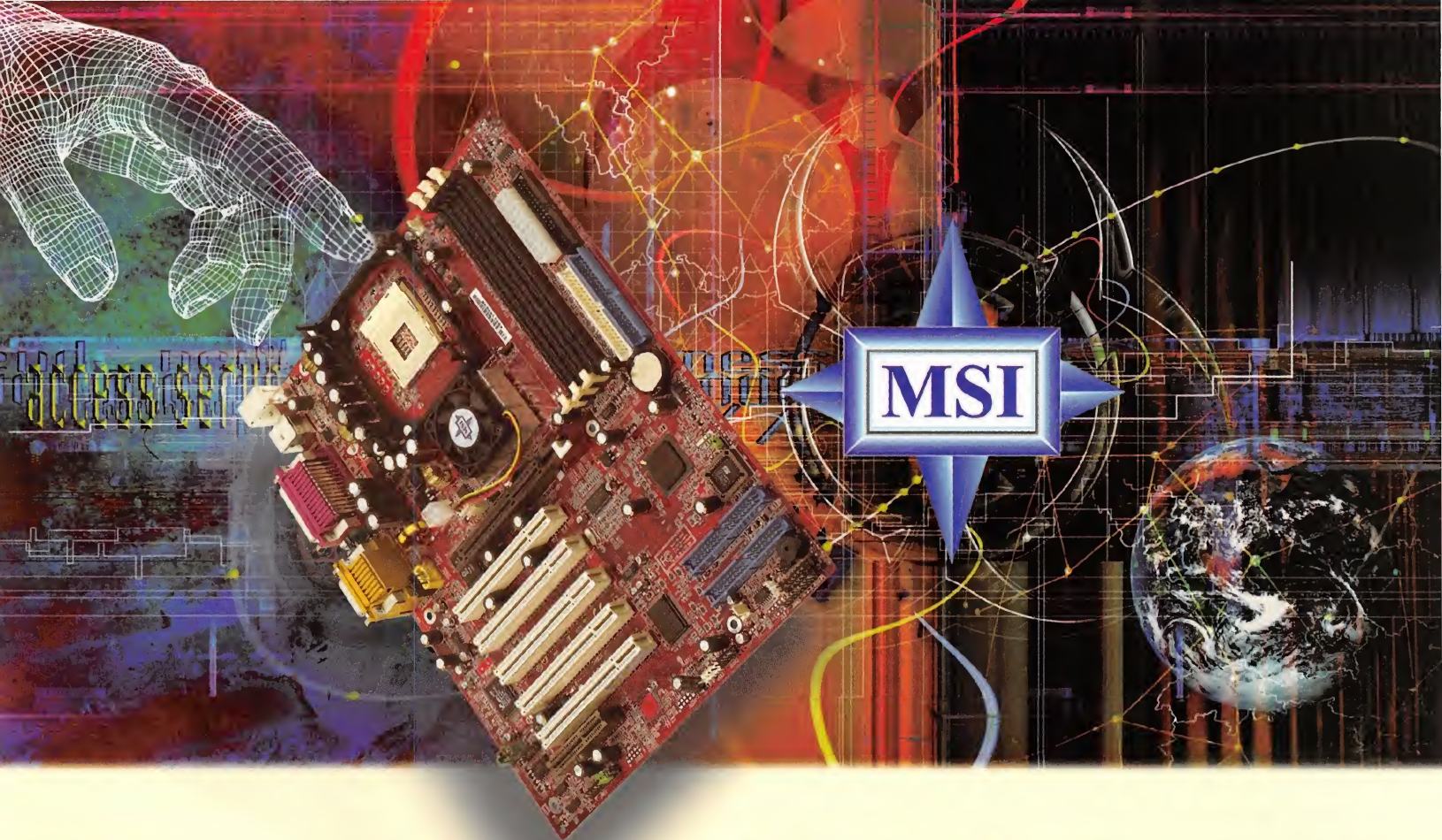
URL: www.amd.com

Phone: N/A

Great performance at a decent price, but Intel's Celeron is catching up fast.

SCORE

85



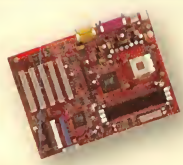
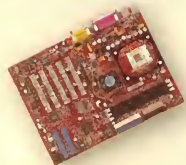
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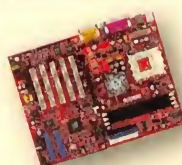
645 Ultra

- SIS 645 + 961 chipset
- Support DDR333
- Support Socket 478 CPU
- onboard sound
- D-Bracket (optional)



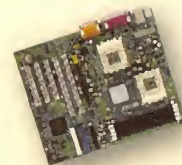
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KT3 Ultra-ARU

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- Support ATA133
- 6 Channel S/W Sound
- USB 2.0 (optional)
- Promise ATA133 Raid (optional)
- Digital SPDIF interface (optional)
- D-Bracket (optional)



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Thrustmaster

HOTAS Cougar

With a name that is an acronym for Hands On Throttle And Stick, the HOTAS Cougar is one serious piece of flight sim technology. Designed so that fighter pilots can control all aspects of the craft from offence to defense, flight to radio without taking his or her hands off the controls for a second allowing them to focus all of their concentration on the HUD (Heads Up Display).

Based directly on the design of the F-16 flight controller the Cougar offers up to 28 programmable buttons, 6 programmable hat switches, adjustable tension on both the throttle and joystick and a huge swag of other functions all packed into a solidly constructed metal control mechanism. The construction of the HOTAS Cougar is very solid - the weight and metal construction make it feel very rugged and comfortable in the hand, though the sheer number of buttons does take quite a long while to get used to. Using a USB interface the controller delivers fast and timely response with very little if any lag or jumpiness. For extra sensitivity in flight the joystick very high definition digital axis so you can be guaranteed that the ride will be as smooth as humanly possible (on the PC at least). In-built memory means that the stick can remember your programmed controls and has the facility to be upgraded with flash ROM.

The stick and throttle feel very natural in the hand and all the various buttons and hat switches

are within easy reach for a normal sized hand. The main double action trigger is the most comfortable thing in the world and should have you painting aircraft silhouettes on the chassis of your 'pooter in no time flat. Add to this the excellent and very user friendly programming tools and you have a near classic.

The HOTAS Cougar is a well designed and constructed piece of gaming equipment that delivers on most fronts as far as flight sims are concerned but a few flaws hold it back for being an absolute must have. Firstly the tension on the joystick even when on the lightest setting is very tight making it a little difficult to maneuver without a significant amount of practice and force. Whilst this isn't such a bad thing for the main part a few times during testing the amount of force required to move the stick was enough to send it toppling onto the keyboard effectively ending the game and causing no end of havoc. The addition of a couple of suction cups on the base would alleviate this problem but unfortunately this is not the case. The price tag also puts the controller out of the price range of all but the most dedicated flight simulator players.

When all is said and done the Thrustmaster HOTAS Cougar is a great control device that only suffers from a small number of flaws, most of which can be neatly avoided with a bit of tinkering of moving your keyboard out of the line of fire.

Daniel Wilks



Price: \$599

Distributor: Thrustmaster

URL: au.thrustmaster.com

Phone: 02 8303 1818

Undoubtedly the best HOTAS gaming stick, but its huge price tag keeps it in the realm of the enthusiast.

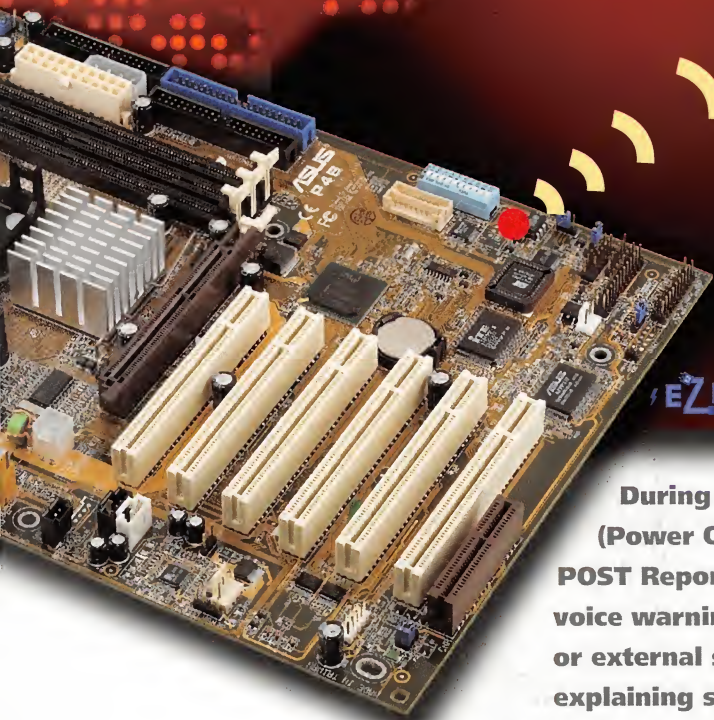
SCORE

89





These motherboards can talk...



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Socket 478

DDR266

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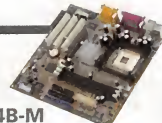
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SPECIFICATIONS



P4B



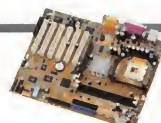
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THE BEAST

THE MOST POWERFUL GAMING PC GOOD MONEY CAN BUY

More small additions and upgrades to The Beast this month with newer or slightly tweaked models of some of the older parts. There may not be any big changes but the all round holistic change equals extra Beast like goodness. Who knows what's in store next month? Stay tuned Beast fans, stay tuned.

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VIDEO SUBSYSTEM AND AUDIO

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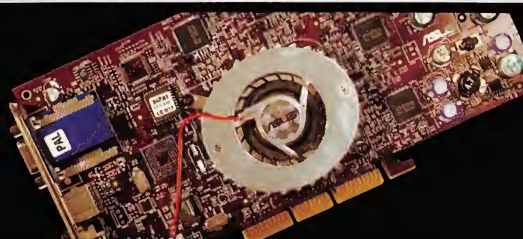


LATEST ADDITION

ASUS V8460 Ultra

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Another vid-card makes the Latest Addition list - and for good reason. It's the fastest, smoothest and most downright sexy bit of computer gear we've seen in a while. It may cost a small fortune but the looks on your friends faces when you unveil it is worth the price.



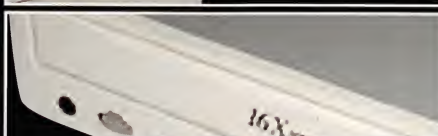
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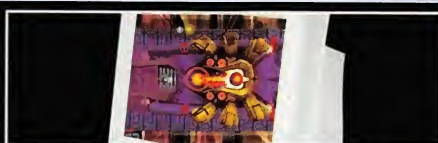
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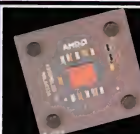
\$12145



BEASTIE

Athlon XP 1600

So fast it you might miss it but at a price you can't ignore.
\$279

**512Mb Kingston DDR RAM**

Half a gig of DDR. Oh baby!
\$265

**Abit KR7A**

We liked the MoBo in the powertest so here it is for ya.
\$300

**40Gb Seagate Barracuda Series.**

Still a contender for size, stability and speed at 7200 rpm.
\$189

**Sony 16x DVD ROM**

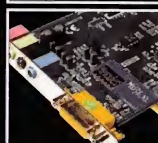
Why have CD when you can have DVD?
\$129

**ASUS V8170 DDR**

We haven't had a video card in the Beastie for a while, so here's a nice shiny G4 MX440.\$230

**Hercules Muse XL**

Cheap but certainly not nasty. Clear, loud and proud.
\$46

**Samsung 753DF**

17" flat and beautiful. Maybe it's not 21", but it's cheap.
\$469

**AOpen HQ45 PRO**

Sound and USB ports on face, PSU and great style combined with excellent price and ample elbow room make this on a winner.\$132

**Hercules XPS 210**

Powerful sub and satellite speaker combo sound great and looks incredibly swanky.
\$119



TOTAL BEASTIE VALUE

\$2125

SETUP

STUART CALVIN WAXES TECHNICAL

Freezing Athlon

Q: My PC is freezing on random occasions. Sometimes I can play for up to an hour or more, other times I only get two minutes into the first period of NHL 2002. I thought it was just 3D games but now I'm not so sure (this is the second attempt at this letter because of the problem). I've just upgraded my Duron 600 with an XP1700+ and before that everything was perfect. The CPU and relevant BIOS updates were the only changes I made to the system (ABIT KG7-RAID, SB Live Value!, LeadTech GF2 Titanium with Detonator Drivers 23.11).

I thought it might have been overheating but it froze at 40°C. My Dad's XP1600+ runs without a hitch at 53°C. I threw in two case fans and some thermal grease and that didn't fix it. Windows does a little blue flickering thing at the WinXP Pro start up screen, but I was told that was nothing. Could the two be related?

Steven Johnston

A: The cause of system instability can be difficult to diagnose and pinpointing the problem can be daunting. Lock-ups or freezing, resets and blue screens are often traced to thermal issues or low quality power. Fatal exception errors can usually be traced to defective or incompatible memory (RAM). There can also be video, sound or other driver issues. Here's a check list to run through: Check your RAM again - it should be matched, PC1600/PC2100 DDR SDRAM modules. Fatal Exception Errors are indicative of defective or incompatible RAM and you can't do much except swap it out. Reboot and select the default BIOS settings, which will, at least, set the RAM timing and CPU voltage back to normal if they were out of whack. Adjust remaining settings when the PC is working again. Swap your CPU into your Dad's or another compatible system. Use their Heat Sink Fan and if there are no problems with the swap-out then the CPU should be OK... problems elsewhere!

Heat. Any number of fans will not help the situation if cables obstruct the airspace in the case, the Heat Sink Fan (HSF) is not mated to the CPU properly or the HSF is a piece of junk. Many components, such as high-end video cards, can generate as much heat as

some CPUs. Other peripherals, such as hard drives, CD/DVD drives and burners also contribute to system heat build-up. If this heat is not removed from the case, the temperature can quickly rise and cause another component, such as the chipset or video card to fail. A single case fan should exhaust at the top rear of the case and a second fan, if fitted, should be an intake at the bottom front. A poorly fitted HSF, too little thermal interface material (paste) or too much paste, will allow the CPU to wind up to over 70°C in a matter of seconds on boot-up while the temperature monitor finds it hard to record anything over 40°C.

Power. PCs need clean, continuous power and not all PSUs are created equal. Check yours for compatibility at AMD.com and if it doesn't match up, then invest in, say, an Enermax or Topower, especially if all of your PCI slots are loaded up with cards and you run the monitor off the PC as well. AMD XP configuration info here:

http://www.amd.com/us-en/Processors/TechnicalResources/0,30_182_869_4348,00.html

The latest BIOS, kg768.exe, (dated 28 Jan 01, ID68) is here:

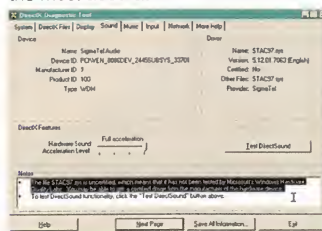
<ftp://ftp.abit.com.tw/pub/download/fae> Drivers. RAID controllers can be picky and only disks should be attached, using 40 pin/80-conductor UDMA IDE cables. If your board has an AMD 761/VIA 686B hybrid chipset then check ABIT.com.tw for new chipset drivers. If you have VIA 'all-round' then grab the latest 4in1 from VIA Arena here:

<http://www.viaarena.com/?PageID=2> The latest drivers for all components (videocard, soundcard, etc.) should be used as well so install the latest SB drivers and upgrade the Detonators to v28.32 from nvidia.com

Re-configure the PC as a barebones system (install only the motherboard, CPU, one memory module, video card and any necessary disks). Once the system is stable, add peripherals one at a time. This will make it much easier to identify problem components or drivers and resolve any conflicts. Lastly, and some of us have done it at one time or another, perhaps there is a cut or nicked track on the MoBo from the installation of the new chip and HSF! Nothing short of a new motherboard will fix this.

CPU Temperature Monitoring

Q: I have a PC with 256 MB DDR RAM, MSI K7T266 Turbo Pro2 motherboard and an Athlon XP 1700+ running on Windows ME. I use PC Alert III provided by MSI to determine my CPU temperature, but when I look in the AMI BIOS hardware monitoring section, it shows a different reading. For example in PC Alert, the CPU temperature is 55°C but in the BIOS, it reads 50°C. I am using the GlobalWIN WBK68 cooler. Which is the most accurate?



Roast Chicken

A: In a few words - probably the BIOS. The idea that you can get a proper measurement from any type of external thermistor is not true. No matter how close you get to the die, no matter where you position the probe, you are still receiving bad temperature data as the probe is surrounded by air on all sides of a different temperature than the CPU core itself. The only accurate way to measure temperature in a CPU is using an internal thermal solution such as those supported on the PIII, PIV, and Athlon XP - but you need a motherboard to support it and I'm not certain that your does this. The operating temperature specification for the AMD Athlon XP+ is based on a measurement taken directly from the top centre of the CPU die and is transmitted directly to the BIOS. Any quality hardware monitoring software will be 'AMD aware' and thus use the CPU die temperature reported to the BIOS rather than using the additional wire in the CPU HSF cable.

Typically, the maximum operating temperatures for Socket A AMD Athlon and AMD Duron desktop processors are 90°C for processors operating up to 1GHz, and 95°C for processors operating above 1GHz. PC Alert III, v3.4.6.0, for Win9X, WinNT, WinMe, Win2000 and WinXP provides for a "Set CPU temperature upper limit"

setting of 75°C. If you use this alarm setting then the CPU may well be over this temperature before you discover it. Better to use the BIOS alarms for AMD CPU's in modern motherboards.

Watt Do I Need?

Q: I am looking to buy an AMD AthlonXP 1700+. It's going to be working in conjunction with an MSI K7T 266 PRO2 motherboard. What sort of power supply would best suit it? I see 400W PSUs for sale but do I really need one? Would a 250W do? What possible reason could I want 400W for? Is it to allow for heaps of fans or something?

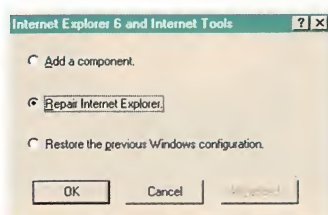
Lawrence Steenberg, Tasmania

A: A Lots of power, in one word is, 'futureproofing'. Power requirements depend on how much stuff powers off your PC. Most home-users can get away with low power (150-200W), often poor quality PSUs because there are few, low power peripherals to run: an old chipset, an old disk, a 4x speed CD-ROM, a 1-4 MB display adaptor and so on. On the other hand a quick peruse of the K7T266 Pro2-RU reveals a lot more:

A fast, powerful chipset - VIA VT8233 (376BGA); High Bandwidth Vlink Client controller; Integrated Fast Ethernet LPC; Integrated Hardware Sound Blaster/Direct Sound AC97 audio; UDMA 33/66/100 busmaster-mode PCI EIDE controller; Promise 20265R RAID controller; six memory banks using three 2.5v DDR SDRAM 184pin DIMMs. A floppy port (2 FDD); serial ports; parallel port; IrDA connector; Audio/Game port and a DBracket header; AGP slot; CNR (Communication Network Riser) slot; Five 32bit PCI Bus slots supporting a 3.3V/5V PCI Bus Interface; USB Interface: 4 USB 2.0 ports, 4 USB 1.1 ports - phew! Now, for the average ripping, burning, fragging gamer, throw in the fast CPU, giant heatsink fan, some 133+ disks, a couple of CD/DVD-ROMs, a CD-RW and maybe an internal Zip or Jaz drive. It's not hard to fill up the PCI slots either: networking, modem, FireWire, sound, video display, video capture or MPEG, AM/FM/TV. Consider some lights, a few case fans and other electrical mods, and all of this adds up to some serious wattage. Even if you don't have all these peripherals right now, you might acquire some or all of them in the future. You can also plug

the monitor into the PSU given the additional socket.

AMD.com have a list of recommended PSUs on their website and it's easy to find. The units have been tested for quality and compatibility and you couldn't go wrong with 300-350 Watt Enermax or Topower unit which both feature great reliability and looks (And we all know how important looks are in a PSU - Ed).



Show-Off

Q: I have a problem with my 3D Prophet 4500 + TV Out. I have the latest driver version 3DPK-9X-14028. Every game I play produces glitches including flashing rectangles and parts of the screen shaking. Medal of Honour is unplayable and Giants is only just tolerable. Serious Sam even looks terrible - and that is the game I'm meant to 'show off'. I actually wrote to Hercules and to behold got a reply - they think it is a conflict with the motherboard. So I went to www.intel.com (I think I have an i850) and tried to download an update. This has proven to be a nightmare. Links lead nowhere and I don't even know if I'm doing the right thing. The only other info I know is that it's an ABIT TH7-Raid. Any help would be great (even if it's only a point in the right direction).

Shabra

A: All ABIT TH7 board owners should be aware of the AGP voltage issues associated with their board. Since the Intel 845/850 chipsets support AGP 1.5V only, plugging an AGP 3.3V only AGP card into Intel 845/850 motherboards will burn the MCH chip and cause motherboard damage.

Details here:

<http://fae.abit.com.tw/eng/faq/qa/2001/2001101104.htm>

Motherboard glitches will produce video and sound problems, particularly if software is not installed properly. Brad, there are more than a few things you can do to set this straight. In order, try the following installs until you are happy with the results:

1. Video card drivers (again - sorry!)



Letter of the Month gets this awesome case, fan and keyboard pack from Anyware Computing.

2. Intel Chipset Software Installation Utility Version v3.20.1008 from here: http://developer.intel.com/design/software/drivers/platform/4301/inf_utility/lic_infinst.htm (you have to click "I Agree" down the bottom of this page)

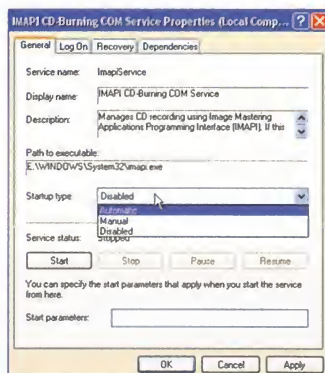
3. HPT370 RAID controller drivers v2.31 from here: http://www.highpoint-tech.com/370drivers_down.htm

4. Install the latest DirectX support (v8.1 is on the PowerPlay #72 CD) or: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/directx>

5. BIOS Revision th736 (ID 36 dated 15 Oct 2001) from here: <ftp://ftp.abit.com.tw/pub/download/fae/>

6. Integrated AC'97 Digital Audio controller - reinstall the drivers for the on-board sound if you have this enabled (they are on the ABIT installation CD). If you use a different sound card then make sure that the on-board sound is disabled in the BIOS and check for updated sound card drivers from the manufacturer.

If your FrontSide Bus is overlocked then wind it back. Keep CD-ROMs and the like off the RAID controllers and check Device Manager for UDMA peripherals not running in DMA Mode. With any luck, just the chipset driver update will fix all.



IMAPI What?

Q: I have XP Pro and just installed CloneCD to backup my CDs. The internal XP burner has now developed problems in that it does write but at the end comes up with an IMAPI.exe error and states it did not write. When I remove CCD XP works again, so it's a conflict - is there a switch I need to

throw? Is there some extra setting up to be done? Can I backup my CDs in XP?

Rohan Playford, NSW

A: The in-built burning software for WinXP (provided by Roxio) is designed for one purpose only and that is to rip and write unprotected audio and perform simple data backups to CD-Recordable and Writeable discs. This is done via the IMAPI (Image Mastering Application Program Interface). The specific formats are the Sony and Philips Red Book audio discs and data discs with both Joilet and ISO-9660 file systems (standard Yellow Book discs). Normally, XP does this well but, in essence, XP is not set up 'out of the box' for success across the entire spectrum of CD burning requirements - particularly backing-up CD's. In fact, the design of XP is such that, installing anything else that requires access to hardware, like other burning programs, is doomed to failure.

As a minimum, to use any additional burning application(s), such as Feurio!, DiscJuggler, Nero or CloneCD, you should:

1. Disable the built-in burning software (right click the burner in Device Manager, "Disable this")

2. Disable the IMAPI service (Control Panel/Administrative Tools/Services/IMAPI...Disable)

3. XP uses a substandard 'SCSI Pass Through' interface so install Adaptec's ASPI (Advanced SCSI Programming Interface) file layer system (v4.70) <http://www.adaptec.com/worldwide/support/suppdetail.html?prodkey=ASPI-4.70>

4. Avoid Programmed In/Out Mode CD/DVD-ROMs and CD-RWs and use UDMA33 writers, at least, which can busmaster

5. Don't install more than one Packet Writing application (Nero's InCD and Easy CD's DirectCD for example).

A burner that will cover nearly all of your 'needs' should be 'RAW'-DAO capable (Disc-At-Once); some burners are Session-At-Once only and may lack the 'RAW' ability to write uncorrected data. Generally, ripping and burning is most successful when performed as an 'Administrator'.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

May the Voice Be With You

Q: Hey, recently got a SideWinder Game Voice. It all installed smoothly until I got up to the Sound Hardware test Wizard. It gets up to the microphone test. I speak into the mic but the recording meter doesn't move. Then when I click next it comes up that my microphone was not detected, but I can hear myself in the speakers when I speak. My sound card is a Hercules MUSE XL. Can you please help me?

Josh Olson, Perth WA

A: There is, I think, just one problematic issue here: DirectX 8.0 or later. Back to basics - the Win98SE install has DirectX 7.0 with a DirectSound update but the latest DirectX version is always recommended. XP and WinMe do not require a DirectSound update but again the latest version is always recommended. Win2K users must use an official release of DirectX 8.x. For Win98 users, there is a DirectSound update here <http://download.microsoft.com/download/sidegamevoice/Patch/1.0/W98/EN-US/269604usa8.exe> available for download, which patches DirectX 7.0 or 7.0a and fixes an audio-sharing issue. At all times, make sure that the headset connects to the control module, which in turn connects to the sound card and a USB port. Current speakers plug into a pod in-line between the control module and its connections to the PC. For a quad speaker setup, the rear speakers still connect directly to the sound card. Fortunately Josh, your soundcard has full duplex with support for Microsoft DirectSound 3D, EAX, and Dolby Surround among others. You can visit a dedicated site here: <http://www.gamevoice.com/gamevoice.asp>

Mod Life

When out of the box just ain't enough

Diablo II: Lord of Destruction Baldur's Gate

There has been a lot of email coming our way recently asking for Diablo II mods. The problem with the vast majority of the mods is that they're pretty amateurish and don't do anything that exciting. Well, all this is set to change with the Lord of Destruction Baldur's Gate TC mod. New classes, new skills, new levels, new monsters, new items - new everything really. One of the major complaints about BG was that it was too slow, but when you add AD&D to the Diablo II engine the final result is a fast and furious hack-fest.

Most of the classes have name changes to reflect the mods origins so now instead of the standard characters you have the Ranger (Amazon), Shadow Thief (Assassin), Berserker (Barbarian), Shapeshifter (Druid) and Cavalier (Paladin) with the Sorcerer and Necromancer remaining unchanged. Skill trees have been modified to reflect a more AD&D style level advancement with skills being given at certain level increments depending on class. For example the Ranger receives two



skills every three levels and the tree has been modified to make Multiple Arrow and Strafe more difficult to get (higher level req) but far more effective than before.

Equipment has been altered to reflect the BG lineage so you can expect to find weapons ranging from +1 to +5 (as well as the other goodies on top) and armour of similar values. 30 new types of gem and 24 new runes have been added to spice up the mix.

Imagine all the fun you'll have experimenting with new and interesting recipes in the Horadric Cube. This is but a tiny sample of the changes made in the mod. You'll have to experience the level changes, magic changes and new item sets for yourself. The Diablo II: Baldur's Gate mod adds a heap more gameplay to an already excellent game - we can't urge you strongly enough to give it a try.



5/5

For: Diablo II: Lord of Destruction

Version: 1.05

Size: 4.9Mb

URL: www.planetdiablo.com/bgmod/

For: Alien Vs Predator 2

4/5

AXP3

New characters, new weapons, new skills and new maps populate this great deathmatch mod for AvP2. With an aim to make the game play more like the movies on which they are based, AXP3 allows players to be Combat Synthetics (like Bishop) or even a Queen Alien.



For: Quake 3 Arena

5/5

Navy Seals: Covert Ops

A few issues ago we had a look at a mod in development called Navy Seals: Covert Operations, a realistic combat TC for Quake 3. The good news is that it's now available to download and play. The bad news is that it's a whopping 189Mb, a bit much for 56k modems.

Arcanum Modules

Currently it is common for a huge number of action games to come with level editors or to release their source code fairly early on but RPGs that support active modding are quite rare. Arcanum is one such beast, coming packaged with a level editor allowing enterprising gamers to make their own levels and adventures from the get go. Whilst not too many mods are currently available in their finished form, here's just a taste of what you can play now and some demos of what will be coming soon.

To kick off Arcanum modding, Troika, the original developers have released a pack of six mini mods to add a few more hours of fun to their already very addictive game. Each of these six mods feature one or more missions, new NPCs, items and storylines ranging from a creepy old witch asking you to "retrieve" a powerful magic tome from a kindly old priest to a 20Mb mind f**k that screws with time and leads to all sorts of trouble. Being official mods all of them are very professional, well-crafted and



definitely worth a look.

Of the other mods out there three stand out from the pack: White Sands, Gray Hills and The Killer Inside. Based roughly on the Stephen King "Dark Tower" novels, White Sands will feature realistic weapons, subtle magic effects, an all-new storyline and a whole lot more. The mod is currently in demo stages.

Gray Hills is in Alpha stages so is still quite buggy but

involves the characters with the creepy "Strange Man" and a slew of strange goings on.

Finally The Killer Inside entreats characters to go to great lengths, even into the depths of hell to stop and elusive madman. Only available as a demo at the moment, The Killer Inside should be released in final code very soon.



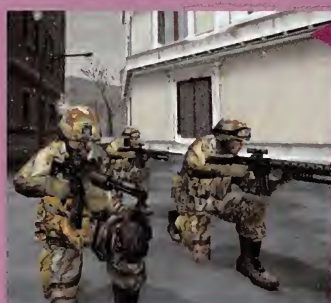
4/5

For: Arcanum

Version: Various

Size: 51.4Mb (total)

URL: rpgplanet.com/arcanum/tinkerer



For: Ghost Recon

New Cold War

10 new weapons and 15 new missions (with a hidden bonus 16th level) which can be played both on and offline make New Cold War the Ghost Recon mod of choice. As an added bonus the mod comes bundled with the Tank Pack mod for hours of extra sneaky fun.

4/5



For: Unreal Tournament

Unreal 4 Ever

There's nothing realistic about this multiplayer mod. Dragons, Demons, Teddy Bears and even Death himself (or should that be itself?) all get the opportunity to frag each other into chunky salsa in a series of great levels. There's also a heap of new weapons with which you can dish out colourful death.

5/5

INBOX

AVOIDING A DEAD END JOB

I write to you about the cutthroat world of PC clans. It is really surprising that almost all FPS have large clan bases. Quake, Deus Ex and most notably Counter-Strike. Just the other day I participated in my first CS tournament. 16 teams fighting (or should I say fragging) it out for the \$400 first prize. Though it is a large amount of money for someone of my age (I'm not old enough to buy Penthouse but older than the age group that watches Play School) it isn't the REAL reason why I went. Nope, it was for the sheer thrill of testing my clan out and comparing us against other clans. To put a long day short, we lost.

But during the tournie I had a vision of the future. Though I doubt it will occur, I'd love it if FPS tournaments became a full time professional 'sport'. Imagine the HUGE LAN wars, the huge amounts of people fragging away, the amount of free pizza and coke, but most importantly the amount of money being poured in via sponsors. I can see it now, Intel and AMD holding their own tournies with cash prizes rivalling AFL salaries.

I know of the WCG being held all over the world and it is an excellent step in the right direction. The CPL is also helping the push for professional PC tournies. One day I can see this happening. Me and my friends playing Quake 5, Counter-Strike Condition Zero, and God knows other FPS.

Lan Huang

THIEVING NASTIES

First I would like to thank you for the great mag, I have subscribed for two years now and won 2.5 games in the comps. Lord of Destruction cost me many hours of sleep just getting to the expansion levels, it was great to finish the first scene and the next day I went to work with a smile on my face.

BUT I got home from work and my front door had been smashed and my whole computer system was gone along with my copy of LoD and Brood War which were in the two drives. Worst still is the fact that we had not been insured at the time of the break in. Luckily enough, because of a total upgrade three months before, I had backed up most of my files (an accumulation of 4 years of junk). As I do not normally back up, luck was all it was. So words of warning:

Backup, Remove games from system, and Make sure you are insured so you can say "oh well now I can get a new system". I now write this on the system at work, saving until I can get another system.

Thomo

A moment's silence please, for our friend's lost precious. Curses to the nasty hobbitises that stole it.

I SAY, I SAY, I SAY

Happy Birthday for April/May. Lets hope you don't "stay six now, for ever and ever". Anyway, here's a little joke for ye that I wrote myself, hope you like it:

John Carmack, Warren Spector, and Peter Molyneux are all flying on a plane one day (Keep reading please). All of a sudden the pilot comes out screaming "We're all going to die!!!", grabs a parachute and jumps out of the plane. John, Warren, and Peter all grab a parachute and also make a jump for it. However, sadly they're parachutes don't open and they all plummet to their deaths.

When the three of them get to heaven (Yes they all get there) John starts complaining about the parachutes, "The parachute company obviously didn't do enough to ensure that the parachutes were top quality. It takes years of releases and re-releases to ensure that a parachute is up to scratch, and they should never stop."

Warren then says "I disagree John, if your going to do something you should do it right and do it right first time. When it comes to the safety of human beings, we should be given the greatest parachutes of all time."

Peter then pipes up and says "Fair go Warren, they never said it would be the greatest parachute of all-time."

Matthew Spratt

Badda Ching!

WHERE'S MY PLATFORM?

Unreal mag, been buying since #1, you guys/gals are the pooh. :)

I would like to know why game developers/publishers are slowly ignoring the PC? Well this is not 100% true, but personally I would have bought any NBA LIVE series from EA without thinking twice about it.

But after many weeks of questioning the

LETTER OF THE MONTH

HERE COMES THE CAVALRY!

I guess after several years of reading, since the very first issue in fact, I have finally got something to say to the great crew at PCPP and the readers out there. First up, the guys at PCPP are doing a great job, you know it, we know it, a gamer could hardly ask for more.

Watching the growth and evolution of gaming in Australia from both the annals of your mag and from being a participant in nearly every significant gaming event in modern times (the emergence of 3D, the takeover of multiplayer and so forth) makes one somewhat nostalgic and covetous when it comes to seeing a small movement of change, in what has become a comfortable equilibrium in gaming lifestyle. (Take a breath! -Ed.)

A newcomer to the PCPP forums I was overwhelmed by some of the animosity and disdain of some as well as the passion and pride displayed by the loyal followers of PCPP. Recently of interest the inclusion of X-Box reviews, prompted what can be only described as heated discussions between some very vocal gamers.

Taken aback by the ferocity of the posts and heartened to see the PCPP crew actually getting themselves involved in the discussions only served to highlight one thing to me. This being that the gamers of Australia are truly privileged. Why? you ask. Simple.

The unbridled passion you see displayed by people on the forums only comes about when they have something they feel they are a part of and can recognise with. PCPP is just such an entity. Each month I read my fresh issue from cover to cover. Sitting beside my computer is the entire collection of PCPP cover discs. To me PCPP is more than a magazine it is an institution of gaming life for the PC fanatic.

PCPP filled a void many years ago by giving the gamers of Australia their own magazine which looked at what was happening in their own country. It is easy to see PCPP means so much to so many people now and will do for years to come. Thanks for being a part of my gaming life PCPP, no matter how you change, I and many gamers will still look to you to be our bible of gaming goodness.

Calis

Thanks Calis, we appreciate the sentiment. Our aim is still chasing the fun of gaming, wherever it might reside.

guys at numerous EB's, "When's Live '02 coming out??" and getting the same reply "There's no release date..." I decided to look at the official website and it was only available on PSX/PS2/XBOX!?! I was like "WTF?? Yeah they'll release it later..." so I went into the message board and there were numerous posts of people releasing some frustration because of no PC version.

I've played NBA LIVE 2002 on the PS2, and graphics are good, not as good as it would be on a PC, but acceptable. But what ruined it completely for me was the camera angle, usually there's only 3/8 playable views in the PC version, but there is only ONE view... behind the player. It is almost impossible to play this way, and every time possession is changed, the screen rotates 180 degrees. read: VERY DIZZY!!

I do not want to buy a PS2 or XBOX to play a basketball game with a crappy view like that. Will NBA2K2 ever come to the PC?? Please do not ignore the PC developers/publishers, we are still a large community that has demand for your games, even though you have new toys to play with (XBOX/PS2/GAMECUBE) they will eventually be replaced unlike PC's which are always here!!

ez

With more and more games developed roughly simultaneously on all platforms (including PC), you should have no problem in seeing your favourite arcade style games on PC. Having said that, NBA Live 2002 is not coming to PC, I'm afraid.

I HATE HALO

As you will all already know Halo was released earlier this week. I have just recently played it at a friend's house and... well... It TOTALLY sux0rs. I couldn't believe it. The hype, the build up, the bull#%!@.

Firstly the stupid story line. I mean come on. A ring floating around a planet? Where is its point of gravity? And the weapons just plain suck. The game play is very repetitive after a while because you get very bored of shooting the same goddamn little aliens (3 types to be exact). Now I'm not going to say that the graphics are crappy or anything but they aren't anything special. Other games on the PC and PS2 have graphics just as good if not better than Halo.

Tetranate

EAT ME

I am one of those unfortunates who love the thrill of first-person shooters but who, until recently, have not been able to enjoy them with my peers. Quite frankly, they make me

want to chuck. I get all clammy and nauseous after only a few minutes of play, or even faster if just watching someone else play. The better the graphics, the worse the sickness, incapacitating me in a matter of moments and leaving me lying on the floor groaning in a pool of sweat with my eyes squeezed shut (and no it's not what you may be thinking).

Now I know that there must be others out there who suffer from the same affliction but are too afraid to say for fear of ridicule. Never fear, help is at hand. Discretely swallow a Kwell tablet (anti-motion sickness medicine) or similar, half an hour before booting up and you'll be right as rain. It has seen me through all-nighter LAN's with friends with no one having to question my constitution. If you don't want to support multi-national drug companies then I hear that some ginger can do the trick as an alternative remedy for motion sickness. I'm not sure if that extends to ginger nuts though...

Jason de Nys

NB: PCPP does not endorse the taking of any non-prescribed substances. But resident motion sickness expert Daniel will take this information on board...

WARRANTIES

I'm writing this to express some concerns I have regarding warranties on PC hardware.

In September of 99, I purchased a computer that had a good old SR440BX motherboard in it. 8 months later I had to return it, as it had suddenly died on me. After upgrading to a new 8155EA motherboard for something like \$240 (just the motherboard) I thought I wouldn't have any problems. However, three days ago my PC went down again - the motherboard had died once more. So, chump that I am, I took it into my trusty computer repairer and am told it will take 2 weeks to get the same motherboard, a refurbished one, from Singapore. I told them that I need my computer for University work as I am a Computer Science student and that two weeks was a joke. I could order something online from the states and it only takes 3 working days. They cheerfully offered me a new 8155EA2 as a replacement, except it was going to cost me \$180 for the new motherboard.

Are warranties for computer hardware even worth the paper that they're printed on? In this rapidly developing field, 3 years may as well be a decade, as some technology is outdated before it even hits the shelves, let alone three years down the track.

Darksaber

FROM THE FORUMS

What's your favourite Oz city/town? I love brisbane, it's not too busy, plenty of things to do, nice clubs, plenty of pubs. Not TOO much crime, within reach of the gold coast or the sunshine coast.

I've been to sydney and adelaide as well, sydney I hated, it was dirty and smelly and noisy, and cars freaking everywhere.. it sucked.. Adelaide.. well.. yeah.. nuff said..

**Praetor
Gaming God**

Hey, Praetor, you dissin' us Adelaidians?? I'd have to say that no city or town is the best, personally (though I live in Adelaide). I love the open country. Fresh, clean air, and lots of room to move. And usually, it's quiet!

**CraigyB
Peon**

Which are RPGer's looking more forward to? Morrowind or Diablo.

Considering there both due to come out at around the same day, I think us RPGer's will have something to do for a while.

Although Morrowind looks like it'll jerk like a biatch on anything less than a Cray Supercomputer. Whereas Dungeon Siege doesn't sound like it's got much of a story to it, but it's got one thing up on Morrowind and that's Multiplayer.

**The Angry Gamer
Monkey**

Does anyone else agree that the single player of moh kicks the monkeys ass up the stairs and back down agian?

**Silver Pyro
Monkey**

Hell yeah, awesome game. Just a little tip Silver Pyro, type a little s-l-o-w-e-r next time ;-)

**Mowerman
Guardian**

The ending was a bit sudden...

**VermillionN
Tiefling**

GAME:

One Must Fall 2097

A long long time ago in a land far far away (1994 I think) I owned a shiny new 386/SX16. It was fast. It was so fast that I had some problems playing some of my old games. I was disillusioned. To add to my sense of disillusionment, my father had just re-married and my mother was about to do the same. What was a quiet introspective boy like myself to do? Luckily I'd spent a lot of my childhood watching cartoons and my memories of them informed me of what I needed to do. I rushed out and bought One Must Fall 2097 and took my solace in the arms of giant robots. As they had in the past and undoubtedly will in the future the metal behemoths opened up their loving (and charmingly rusty) arms and made everything all right.

Right from the start I knew I was on to something big. At 20Mb the game nearly filled up my entire hard drive so my fingers were firmly crossed that I'd spent my money wisely and not bought a total dog. All my fears were put aside when the bombastic opening music started and the gloriously primary colour scheme nearly burned itself indelibly into the back of my eyes. How could anything so beautiful be bad? OK, we've all been burned by things that look good by play awful, hence the old saying "no matter how much you polish a turd it is still a turd", but this time I was right on the money. Not only was One Must Fall 2097 good, it was probably the greatest fighting game ever on the PC. It combined graphics and gameplay with a great plot; good music and some really cool special features.

Unlike the other (non-PC) fighting games of the time, OMF: 2097 was non-violent, or as non-violent as you could make a game about killing each other. To this end the game allowed players to choose pilots as well as giant robots. You could have all the robot-

based carnage you could want without the sight of blood or gore. I know that's not much of a selling point to all of you out there who wanted to get a copy of Postal when it was banned (anyone... anyone...? - Ed.) and feel the same way about GTA3 but it was a pretty cool gimmick at the time. By choosing compatible robots and pilots the players could not only distance themselves from the carnage but could mix and match strengths and weaknesses making a fighter to their specification as well.

The year is 2097 and as we have come to expect from the dark future governments are just puppets for multi-national corporations, the biggest corp. on the block being W.A.R. (World Aeronautics and Robotics), the number one supplier of machines on Earth. Ganymede, one of Jupiter's moons is set to be colonised and W.A.R. needs a representative to watch over it. The board of executives, unable to choose the candidate mandate that all 10 applicants must fight it out in the arena using their robots, proving once and for all who is most qualified for the dangerous job. Finally a fighting game where the winner actually gets something more than kudos or some lame-ass title. These guys get money and power for winning. How's that for incentive?

To go along with the cracking premise was excellent single and multiplayer gameplay, supremely cool anime style characters, secret bosses and robots, powerups, the ability to improve skills, fatalities and a host of other neat 'em up style goodness. The depth of the game was outstanding; the gameplay awesome and the sound of metal on metal stunning. One Must Fall 2097 proves once again that giant robots are good for what ails you. Is there nothing they can't do?

Daniel Wilks



"I want the job!"



One Just Fell



Robots love Flags



"Giant robots attacked Tokyo today..."



More intensive action from 1994



A Killer Move

CHARACTERS

Because all of the Ganymede positions in OMF: 2097 were chosen internally the skills and specialties were not at all what you'd expect for a fighting game. These people were real and their motives were just as feasible. They hunted murderers, wanted money or just had to prove themselves.

Crystal Age: 23
Specialty: Genetic Engineering

Steffan Age: 17
Specialty: Sales and Marketing

Milano Age: 35
Specialty: Security, Kickboxing

Christian Age: 23
Specialty: Genetics, Jujitsu

Shirro Age: 73
Specialty: Public Relations, Karate

Jean-Paul Age: 27
Specialty: Market Analysis

Ibrahim Age: 48
Specialty: Robotics Engineer

Angel Age: Unknown
Specialty: Unknown

Cossette Age: 39
Specialty: Space Station Design

Raven Age: 26
Specialty: Bodyguard, Kickboxer

Major Kreissack Age: 103
Specialty: President of W.A.R.

Daniel Wilks

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PC PowerPlay

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Theme Hospital
Interstate '76
Quake v1.06
Cricket 97 and much more...

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter
Outlaws
Star Trek Generations

QUAKE ADDONS:
Custom Gaming

ISSUE 43 June 95

"In the coming months we should see a lot of local servers popping up all over Australia, they are the future of multiplayer gaming."

Staff Writer

[illegible][illegible][illegible]



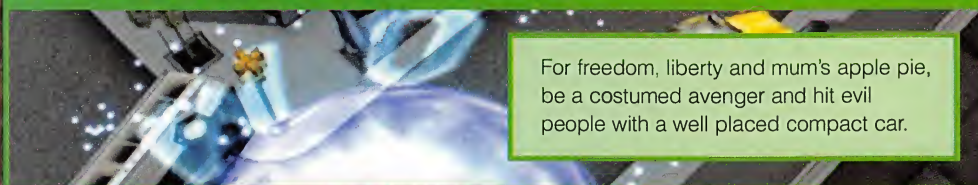
PCPP #74 - All hail and rejoice for the new cover CD is here, packed, as usual to the gunners with treats for good girls and boys. As has now become the tradition of the cover CD we offer you a quality game for free. 'Tis mott in honour of the imminent release of Masters Of Orion 3 we offer you a gratis copy of its predecessor, Masters Of Orion 2. If that's not enough for you then we also include all of your favourite

features; mods, utilities, patches and demos. We'd feel remiss having a features review of Freedom Force without putting the demo on the disc so all you at home can get a taste of its superhuman goodness. Rest assured that everything on the CD is worth your time having a look at. We guarantee you won't be disappointed.

CD God
cdgod@next.com.au

CD01 - Demos

FREEDOM FORCE

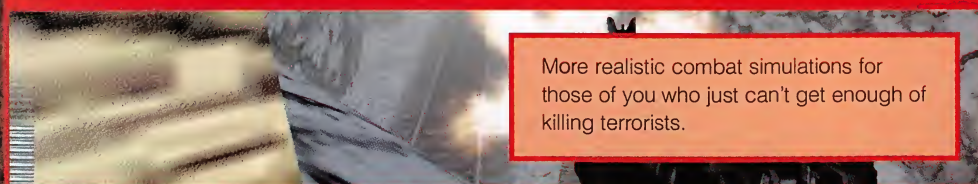


For freedom, liberty and mum's apple pie, be a costumed avenger and hit evil people with a well placed compact car.

Requires

Pentium 3 450Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 300Mb free hard drive space, 16Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included). GeForce2 recommended

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

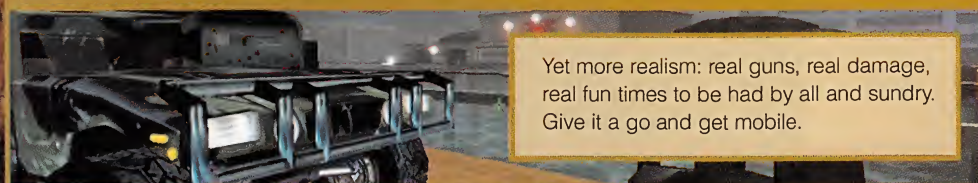


More realistic combat simulations for those of you who just can't get enough of killing terrorists.

Requires

Pentium 2 350Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 150Mb free hard drive space, 8Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included). 16Mb video recommended

MOBILE FORCES

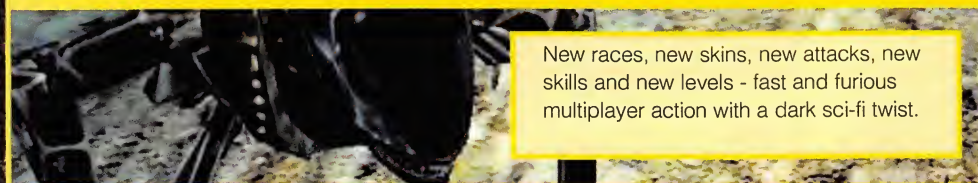


Yet more realism: real guns, real damage, real fun times to be had by all and sundry. Give it a go and get mobile.

Requires

Pentium 3 450Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 200Mb free hard drive space, 16Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included). GeForce2 recommended

ALIENS vs PREDATOR

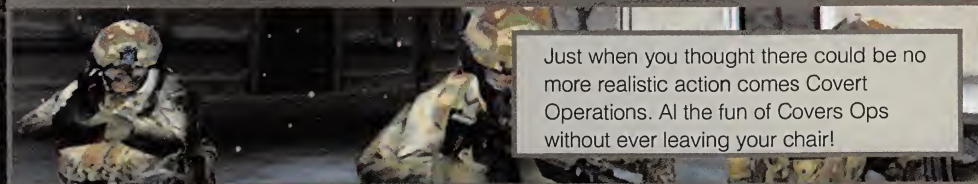


New races, new skins, new attacks, new skills and new levels - fast and furious multiplayer action with a dark sci-fi twist.

Requires

Pentium 2 350Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 150Mb free hard drive space, 8Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included), full version of AvP2. 16Mb video recommended

COVERT OPERATIONS

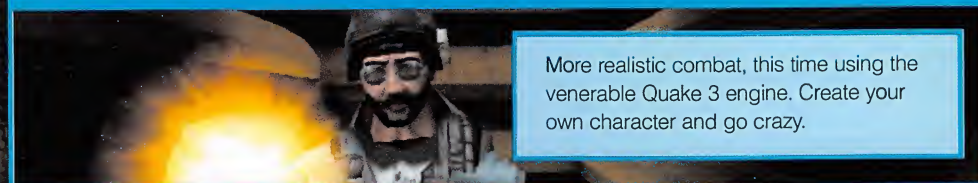


Just when you thought there could be no more realistic action comes Covert Operations. All the fun of Covert Ops without ever leaving your chair!

Requires

Pentium 3 450Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 250Mb free hard drive space, 16Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included). 32Mb video recommended

NAVY SEALS

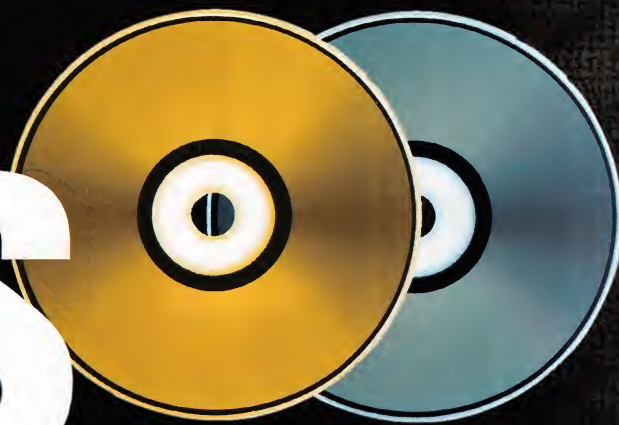


More realistic combat, this time using the venerable Quake 3 engine. Create your own character and go crazy.

Requires

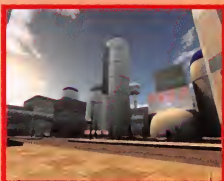
Pentium 2 350Mhz, 64Mb RAM, 150Mb free hard drive space, 8Mb Videocard, installation of DirectX8 (included). 16Mb video recommended

CDS



CD02 - Mods & Utils

MOD LIFE 074



Bid For Power

Slink through blasted villages and get the drop on your mates dogface style in this high-action, WW2 styled mod for Quake3.

Requires full registered Quake3 to play



Navy Seals Covert Ops

Another awesome Quake3 mod that changes all elements of gameplay. New modes, new weapons, new arenas - it's a new Generation!

Requires full registered Quake3 v1.31 to play



Unreal4Ever

New models, new weapons, new gameplay modes, it's the flashy mod that will make Unreal Tournament last... forever

Requires full registered UT to play



Baldur's Gate Mod

Take Diablo2 and turn it into Baldur's Gate. Or is it the other way around? No, Diablo2 to BG, definitely. Whichever way, it's crazy!

Requires full registered Diablo2 to play



Aliens vs Predator Extreme

So amazing we just had to mention it twice. Yow!

Requires full registered AVP2 to play



New Cold War

Well the person writing these pages up lost the description of this mod. Why not play it, then write in and tell us? I guess it involves Russians...

Requires a mystery game to play



Arcanum Mods

For when too much Arcanum is barely enough. More adventures, more quests, more items, more NPCs, more Arcanum!

Requires full registered Arcanum to play

SYSTEM



Creative Labs SB Drivers
IomegaWare Tools 3.1
Detonator XP 23.11
MS Jet DB Engine 3.5.1
Logitech Mouse 9.41.2

PATCHES



AvP2 1.0.9.3
Anarchy Online 13.6
Aquanox 1.1.7
Battle Realms bp1
Etherlords 1.04
Ghost Recon 1.1.5.0
Wizardry 8 patch 4

UTILITIES



Adobe Acrobat Reader
5.05
DirectX 8.1
GetRight 4.5c
HyperSnap 4.20.0.0
SANDRA+ 2002 8.59f
StuffIt 7.0
WinRAR 2.90
Winzip 8.1
ZoneAlarm 2.6.362



INSTRUCTIONS

The majority of the files on this disk are compressed and will require an appropriate extraction utility in order to open them. Winzip, as well as many other helpful tools, are located in the Utilities section of the CD2 link.

We cannot offer opinions or support for the software included on this DVD but should you have any legitimate enquiries about the DVD's functionality you may send an email to - cdgod@next.com.au.

Welcome to DVD, but be warned: this is not as simple as running a CD! The DVD disc is a Hybrid, including both the DVD movie and DVD-ROM components. The movie should play in most set-top players as well as DVD-ROM drives that support hybrid (mixed media) DVDs. The ROM component (all the software you're looking for) is only readable in a PC DVD-ROM drive that can read DVD-R and DVD-RW discs. We cannot give assurances as to whether it will play in any particular drive. Please check with the manufacturer of your drive for compatibility.

The DVD-ROM component is set to autostart. If it doesn't, simply run the file called Start.htm in the root directory.

Should you have any problems with this DVD please send an email to cdgod@next.com.au. If the DVD is damaged you can receive a replacement by posting the DVD to the reply paid address below. Please post your faulty DVD within a month of purchase, or we may not be able to replace it! Please remember to include your return address.

FREE ANIME! - Works on your set-top DVD, or with a DVD-decoder on your PC



BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM

It's kind of like Lain, but a little less techy. It's kind of like a lot of stuff really, but in truth it's really itself. Sounds Zen? You ain't seen nothing yet!

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LATEST DEMOS Pure Gaming Goodness!

More than a gigabyte of gaming on one disc! Enormous Demos that are just too insanely huge to download. Good thing then that we're quite, quite insane!

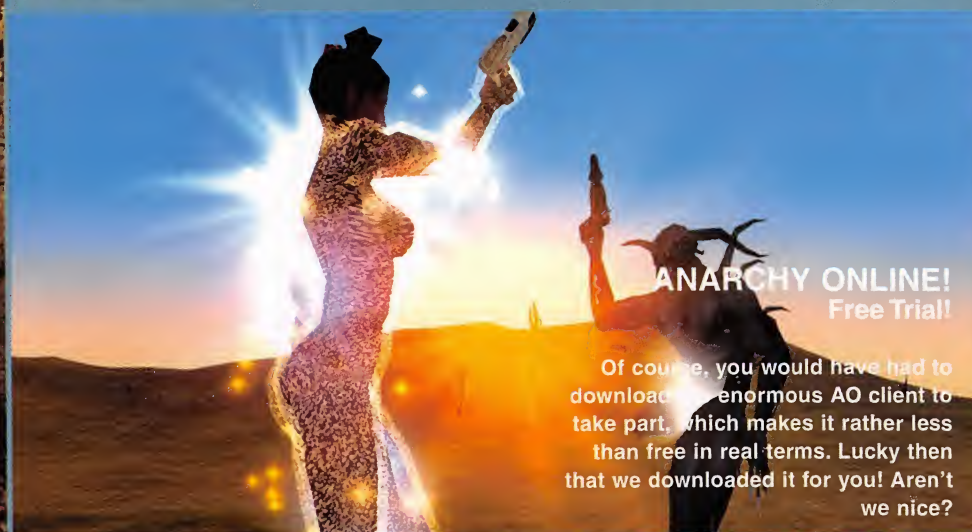
Freedom Force

Arx Fatalis

Global Ops

AND MORE!

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Of course, you would have had to download the enormous AO client to take part, which makes it rather less than free in real terms. Lucky then that we downloaded it for you! Aren't we nice?

DVD



Contains full contents of CD PowerPlay! See page 110

FULL VERSION FREE GAME!



MASTERS OF ORION 2 The Empire-building strategy classic!

Another free game! Are we nuts? Are we just too good for you? You know the problem of course; now you're all spoilt and want a free game every month. Well sorry bucko, but it's not going to be like that! No free game for you next month. No. No I'm sorry, I'm just not prepared to... what I was supposed to talk about MOO2 here? Oh... it's good.

Runs on most Windows systems, although music and sounds may not work

ADD-ON CAMPAIGNS!

ALIENS vs PREDATOR 2 Plus loads more!



Go mad with the Mods Plus, go insane with all the add-on campaigns for Arcanum, and go utterly bonkers in general for no good reason...



ROM's BUNKER - Extra goodies too tasty to fit on an ordinary coverdisc

Over 300Mb of maps, utilities and extras lovingly assembled by PowerPlay's #1 Fan and website newshound, ROM. 100 Q3A maps, 40 Unreal Tournament Maps, bots for Half-Life, RTCW maps - the list is huge. Boot up the DVD for details, and enjoy!



Quake3 Maps

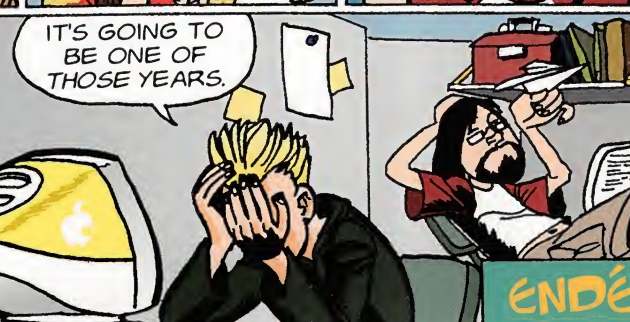
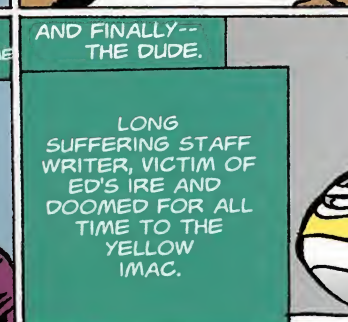
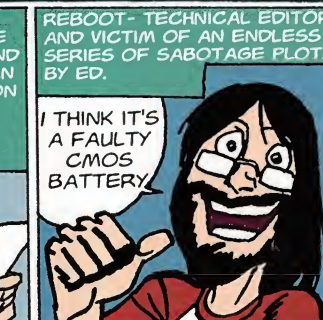
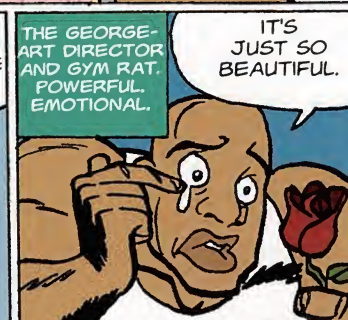
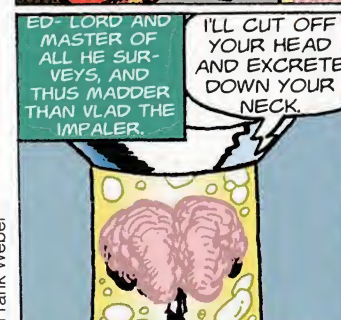
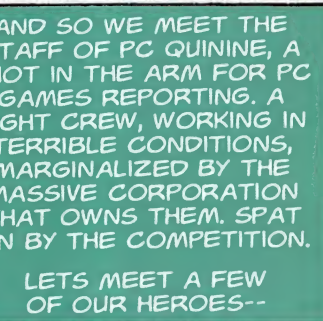
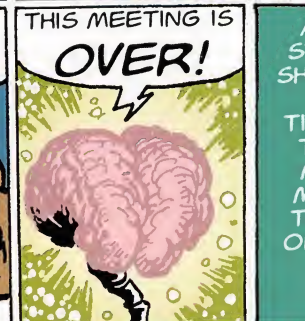
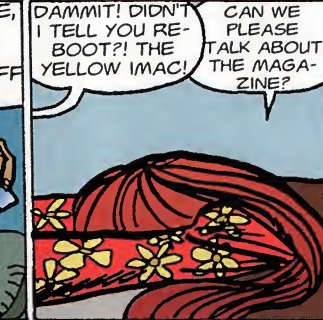
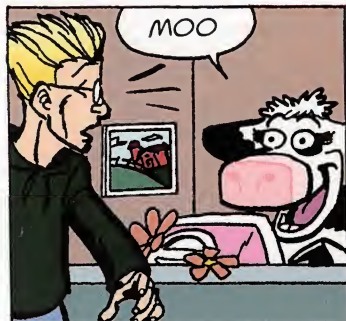
UT Maps

Half-Life Bots

System Requirements



Most items in ROM's Bunker require full registered versions of Q3A, Half-Life, Unreal Tournament and Return to Castle Wolfenstein



Words: The Man in Black ■ Pictures: L Frank Weber

PCPP#75 onsale 5th June 2002



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www.overclockers.com.au
www.gamingin3d.com

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\$475 RRP



PC-12B
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\$320 RRP

Common features

- ◆ Sliding tray for motherboard
- ◆ 2 front ball bearing fans with filter
- ◆ 1 rear ball bearing fan
- ◆ Selectable fan speed control
- ◆ Thumbscrew
- ◆ 490x210x450mm
- ◆ 12 total bay 4x 5.25", 3x3.5", 5x3.5 Hidden



PC-70
Silver full aluminium anodised \$539 RRP



PC-71
Black full aluminium anodised \$559 RRP

- ◆ 2 front ball bearing fans with filter
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- ◆ Selectable fan speed control
- ◆ Thumbscrew
- ◆ 210X595X588mm.
- ◆ Suitable for dual CPU M/B.
- ◆ 15 total bay



PC-5 Economic
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\$199 RRP



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\$199 RRP

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Aluminium Server Cases



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270x665x498mm
◆ 14 total device bays
4x5.25,3x3.5, 8x3.5 hidden for HDD
◆ 4 x 12cm two ball-bearing
Suitable for dual CPU M/B
◆ On SCA version: SCA-2 Hot Swap bays, Support Ultra 160, SCA-2 backplane module
\$1190 RRP, SCA \$1390 RRP



PC-76
Silver full aluminium anodised.
◆ 20 total bays 6x5.25,2x3.5, 12x3.5 hidden
◆ 6 ball-bearing cooling fan
◆ 265x559x630mm
◆ Suitable for dual CPU M/B
\$990 RRP



PC-78
Silver full aluminium anodised
◆ 20 total device bays
6x5.25,2x3.5,12x3.5 hidden for HDD
◆ 4x 8cm two ball-bearing fan
2x 12cm two ball-bearing fan
◆ Suitable for dual CPU M/B (Max size: 12x13)
\$1650 RRP

Case accessories



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Transparent side panel to suit PC-60USB \$85 RRP

PANEL-75
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QLD: QUEEN ST • CARINDALE • CHERMSIDE • INDOOROOPILLY • LOGANHOLME • MARDOCHYDRE • MT GRAVATT
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